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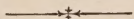
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SPLASH.

I DON'T know what the little jockey's actual name was, or how he was called, when my lord first brought him to Ravenwood, but somehow he got the name of Splash—from Lord Stableton's racing colours, possibly, which were a dark blue, splashed with silver, and it stuck to him. No one ever called him anything but Splash, from my lord down to the stable boys, though the female servants and the tradesfolk put "Mister" before it.



Although he would chatter and talk by the hour together, and then be as fresh as if he had never said a word, he was particularly reticent about himself and his antecedents. We could never discover where he had been brought up, who had trained him, or what races he had run before accepting employment under Lord Stableton. Yet it was clear from the way he rode that he had done a lot of work, and knew more about horses than the oldest hand in the stables. Nor could other jockeys tell us anything about him. He was as great a puzzle to them as to us. We tried our hardest to draw out the secret, but the little beggar was too quick for us. You could never catch him tripping, and to our pointed questions he replied with some impudent personality which closed the subject at once.

It is a hard matter generally to tell a jockey's age, but about Splash we could form no unanimous opinion whatever. He looked old and young at the same time. There was not a hair on his face, and that made some think he was under fourteen; but his manner, his wickedness, and the awful things he knew and said led others to affirm that he was at the least four-and-twenty.

I never knew such a merry little devil in all my life. He sang more songs than ever I knew the names of, and he whistled like a blackbird. Nor have I ever seen his equal in dancing. We had a groom who bore off the palm for a cellarflap, and was considered a marvel until Splash made his appearance; but the moment he set his foot on the sanded floor of the Blue Boar parlour he was off on a dance that made our champion green with envy. You couldn't follow the movement of his feet, and he finished his performance by throwing his leg clean over the groom's head. The groom never danced again, and I do believe it was from chagrin that he left my lord's service and quitted the scene of his former triumphs.

He was a pretty lad, this Splash, with a fair, clear skin—which is, I am told, frequently the result of the gin-drinking to which the lads are trained from their youth—a large mouth, an excellent set of white teeth, a short, impudent, turn-up nose, bold, dare-devil round eyes, and a head covered all over with short chestnut curls that he never attempted to comb straight. We used to chaff him about the size of his mouth, but he took chaff with the best of temper; indeed, I never saw him either savage or surly, and he had always a retort.

"You can't have too much of a good thing," said he. "And so long as I am in decent proportion I don't mind having a good-sized mouth. I've a tongue that just fits it—would you like to see?"

And with that he puts out his tongue at us, and asks if we are quite satisfied. But, on the whole, he was proud of his appearance. When he wasn't wearing the colours he used to be strutting about in a suit of tweed, the very same cut and pattern as my lord's—which seemed to us a most unwarrantable piece of impertinence—with cuffs down to his knuckles, a couple of rings on his fingers, and the air of a duke. He looked best in his jockey's clothes, and he knew it. He was vain of his legs.

"There's a fine thigh, lads, to throw over the pig-skin," he cried, holding up his leg and giving his buckskins a slap.

"If I was a jockey I'd be ashamed of sech," growled old

Briggs, the coachman. "I'd have a leg wi' a little more muscle and a little less fat on to it, if *I* was a jockey."

"If you were a jockey people would think your horse had a pitch-fork stuck on the saddle," said Splash, with a laugh.

Lord Stableton was wonderfully fond of Splash, and many and many an evening I've known him to spend in the company of his jockey—for Splash didn't live in the model cottages with the other servants, but had one of the lodges to himself. Lord! he was much too high and mighty to live like other servants, and look after his own domestic concerns. An old woman came every day to see to his wants. Many a basket of champagne went down to the lodge from my lord's cellar, and often in passing the lodge at night I've heard the corks popping and his lordship's laughter mingling with his jockey's. But the time when his admiration for the lad seemed to pass all bounds was when Splash brought in his horse first to the winning-post. It would have broken his heart, I believe, to see Splash beaten, and I'm not sure but that a beating would have had the same effect upon Splash. Indeed, it was a sight to see the lad bringing his horse in: he seemed to lift the horse over the ground. His lordship's voice could be heard above all others encouraging the lad, and when the race was done he would push his way fiercely through the crowd to get at him.



"My brave little jockey!" he would cry, seizing the lad's hand in his.

You may be sure the rest of us servants bore Master Splash no feeling of good will for the partiality shown to him by our master.

But he was a great favourite with the women-servants, and he used to lord it over them in the kitchen like the grand Turk in his seraglio. He used to swear like a trooper in their presence, so that the cook declared he was "the

most blasphem-i-ous young gentleman " she had ever come across. They liked him none the less for that. He used to pinch the fat old cook, and kiss the girls, and all the time he was there there would be a general tittering and blushing, for he had the choicest collection of stories that ever a young man could have, and he was not abashed to tell them before the women. There were several love affairs going on between the grooms and valets and the housemaids, and this greatly added to the jealousy of the men. Many tales were carried to the steward of Splash's behaviour in the kitchen—of the "freedoms" he took with the cook and the girls, and I dare say these were in due course reported to the master, for the steward was as jealous as the rest of the men, and was decidedly sweet on the cook. But my lord took no notice. I remember one day the steward reporting a very grave impropriety, which he vowed he had seen take place between Splash and Jane, the nursemaid. His lordship listened to the end, but instead of being angry he burst into a fit of loud laughter, which was the more remarkable because Lord Stableton bore a high character amongst the surrounding gentry for morality, and never permitted himself to joke in the presence of the servants.



The chief object of Splash's attentions was this nursemaid, but I think it was chiefly for the sake of the children she had in her charge. He was particularly fond of children, and I have seen him take the baby in his arms and nurse it like an affectionate father. Often, in his fine clothes, he would go down upon his knees and romp with my lord's son, a little fellow of four years old. But sometimes in the midst of a frolic he would become quite grave—more earnest and serious than he ever was at another time. Once when he was nursing the baby Lady Stableton quite unexpectedly came upon him, much to Jane's discomfiture, be sure. My lady, however, was not displeased with the young

fellow's attachment to her infant, and she said very kindly,

"You are fond of children, Splash?"

"Yes, my lady," he replied. "It is the one good feeling that hasn't been knocked out of me," and with that he brushed his sleeve across his eyes, and giving the baby to Jane, made his bow to her ladyship, and turned away hastily.

One day Splash came out of the stable as white as death, and leaning for support against the door, said faintly:—

"Run for the master, one of you chaps—I'm hurt. The mare's broken my ribs, I believe."

One ran to the house. A groom, who hated Splash more than the rest, slunk out of the way. I think he had done something to irritate the mare purposely, for generally she was the quietest creature in the stable. His lordship came to the spot hardly less pale than Splash. He carried the little jockey in his big arms to the lodge, but what was odd, he forbade anyone to fetch the doctor. "I will go myself," he said. "Get my horse out."

When the horse was brought out he leapt into the saddle and started, leaving word that no one was to enter the lodge.

When he returned he was accompanied by a doctor; not the family physician who lived quite close, but the doctor from Tibthorpe, three miles away. That again seemed odd to me then.

The hurt was graver than we supposed, and instead of rallying quickly as we expected, Splash grew worse. He formed a great friendship with the doctor—a quiet, fatherly old gentleman, who often sat for an hour together with the patient. Once or twice when I went in to see the little jockey I found him lying with his eyes wide open, and the gravest expression upon his pale face. Turning to me his old smile returned, and he said:



"It makes one serious to stand close to the great scale and know that you haven't run the race fair and square. May the Lord be more merciful to me than mortal judges."

The doctor said that the jockey's system was thoroughly shaken, and advised that he should be sent on a sea voyage. To this my lord assented. He would have gone too, but that the affairs of the nation pressingly required his presence in the House of Lords at that time.

"But I will come to you, my own brave little jockey, after the session."

"We shall not meet again, my lord, I think," said Splash, smiling sadly.

On the last day at the lodge he begged to say good-bye to the children. Lady Stableton brought them herself.

Splash took them one after another in his arms, kissing them in silence; then he tried to say good-bye, but the tears choked his voice, and he turned away with a little stamp of his foot, as if angry that he could not control his emotion.

It was clear to see he *knew* that he should never see them again.

He left England with the doctor whom Lord Stableton had paid to attend him on his voyage—and a pretty sum he must have paid.

Three weeks after the doctor returned with the news that Splash had succumbed, and was no more.

* * * * *

Last autumn I went with the family to Paris. One Thursday his lordship took his family to the Hippodrome, and I was there to wait upon them.

A steeplechase was announced, and a large bouquet was brought in as a prize for the victor. The band played, and in darted a dozen riders.

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed; "there's his lordship's colours."

Lord Stableton started, grew white as the programme in his hand, and turning to me in angry haste, he exclaimed:—

"Who gave you liberty to speak, fellow?"

The arena is so large that I could not see the faces of the riders—only now and then I caught sight of the blue jacket splashed with silver as they walked round to the starting

place. Presently the circus master gave the signal, and off they started. It was a genuine race. From the first the jockey in his lordship's colours took the lead, and I knew why—it was Splash! There was no mistaking that bold rider. Again, the horse seemed to be lifted from the ground. As Splash came triumphant to the winning-post and received the bouquet from the circus-master, all the jockeys removed their caps. Then there was no doubt. There were the bold, dare-devil eyes, the chestnut curls of Splash revealed.

Lord Stableton remained during the whole performance. He never moved a muscle of his face; but he was terribly white. A glance was exchanged between him and my lady, and he bowed his head, it seemed to me, in contrition. I saw him crunch the programme stealthily and slip it under his chair. When the audience left I managed to pick the programme up and get it into my pocket.

When we arrived at the hotel, Lord Stableton, before I withdrew, said—

“You will make preparations for leaving Paris to-morrow.

I bowed and withdrew. Anxiously I untwisted the programme. The riders' names were put opposite their colours, and this was what I read :—

“*Bleu et argent* - - - MISS KITTIE THOMPSON.”

I think as poor little Splash lay ill and in fear of death, she must have repented her past life, and probably on recovering her thoughts turned to the future of the children she loved, and it was for their sakes she sacrificed her own sure fortune, and contrived, with the aid of the old Doctor, to cheat Lord Stableton.



A DERBY REMINISCENCE.

A GEMMAN has to work pretty hard to get a honest penny out of the turf, now-a-days, blimey. An' it's hard for young beginners, gemmen, what's just taking to the profession, an' you might as well expect a blooming church to stand on its steeple as for a betting gemman to establish hisself without a name, or some fake for to catch the heye of the blooming public.



Hats and umbrelleys of all the various colours in the rainbow, I'd tried : likewise, coats barred, spotted, and plain. Nothink would suit the public. They wouldn't trust me wiv their coing, and many a time I've limped home from a race more stone brokeder than what I limped down to it. I was just about chucking the noble profession up, and taking to street novelties, or three sticks a penny, when a circumstance happened for to take place, which was the rescuing of me as I am about to tell you, sons of gentlemen.

I had tramped it down to Epsom, dossing in a nobleman's fowl-house on the road, and was just settling where I'd make my pitch, whilst putting a white band round my hat on which was printed in bright crimsing letters, "Your Old Pal, Johnny Edards," when I ketched sight of another gemman, who was a-looking at me as straight as a one-eyed horse at a gate post.

He was faked up terrights. Black hat, with a black band round it ; black coat, buttoned up to his chin and down to his knees ; black trowsis, black gloves, black all over, 'cept his face, which was a kind of meller red. He'd got a head on him like a Dutch cheese on a chimbley pot.

"Why, oh ! ole cocky ! know me agen ?" I astes.

"My friend," ses he, "I hope we shall all know each other again in a better world," he ses.

"Turn it up," ses I ; "don't you see I'm on the same lay ?" and I pints to my hat and my old windsey chair, and

the little small strap bag wi'out which a gemman ain't never seen.

"My friend," ses he, "I know not what you mean ; but if you will take a track you will obleege me greatly," and he hands me a track about the drunkid's cuss, or sonthink or other.

It took me some time to tumble to the truth, for you see I had taken it into my 'ead he was one of urs in a new and striking get-up. However, I see after a bit as he was a genuine tub-thumpin' devil-dodger, and no kid. Well, we fell into conversation of talk, and I learnt from him as he'd been paid by a society to come down to the Darby and convert the multitude, that he'd never before been to a race, and likewise that he would be much obleeged to me if I would show him where he should stand for to hold forth.

"I desires to fight in the thick of the fray," he ses.

"Then," ses I, suddingly inspired wiv a brilliant notion, "you stick by me, and you'll get it thick enough, or my name ain't Edards."

Well, me and my old pal in black, we took up our pitch, and the blooming mob come on. Just as the horses was being brought out, and the gemmen begun for to sing out their prices, I ses to him, "Now's your time, old man, whale into 'em."

"May I stand on your chair, friend?" ses he.

"Yes," ses I, "go ahead."

He took off his hat wiv the crape round it, and give it to me to hold, and then he began to mount up. As quick as you'd fly half a dollar in the purse trick I changed his hat for mine, and clapping it on his head as he was a-mountain the cheer, I ses : "Keep your hat on, old fireworks, or you'll get a blooming sunstroke."

"Thanks, friend, for the warning," ses he ; and he presses on to the back of his head that hat of mine with the white band, and "Your Old Pal, Johnny Edards," wrote on it in crimsing letters.



Lor blimey, how the mob did roar to see him wiv that hat on, and his solemn mug and his black kid gloves, and wagging his arms in the air, and a working himself purple in the face. warning 'em against the sin of backing horses for money; whilst I, in my chessboard coat, with his black crape hat and a doll in it, was singing out wiv all my might: "I go ten to four on 'Destruction,'" which was the favourite's name.

It fetched the blooming public. I sold out all my tickets and filled my little bag wiv half-crowns before the bell rung. an "You stay here, old man, and take care of the cheer," says I to my friend, who'd roared hisself pretty well hoarse about damnation and one think and another to the mob, which was now gone off, as per usual, to see how their money was running. "You stay here while I go round the corner and get a drink. Stay here, for I promises you that your congregation is a-going to be larger than ever, and your wish to be in the thick of the fray will be realised like one o'clock."

I was sorry to leave him. I assure you, sons of noblemen, I did so wiv a aching heart. I declare to goodness, if I could a paid my scot, I'd a stood by him. But a glance at them hosses convinced me that to do the same would be madness, for there was Destruction a-dragging along behind the others like the sore-eyed kid in a begging affair along the Mile End Road of a Saturday night. But I did what I could for him, and, coming upon a mounted copper, I ses to him,

"General," I ses, "you're wanted up there about as bad as you can be wanted," for already I could hear the roar of the mob a-rushing back from the course to claim their winnings of my old friend.

From the top of a gemman's donkey-barrer I caught a glimpse of my old friend, my hat wiv the crimsing letters shining out in the glorious sunlight. It was only for a moment that I saw that well-known hat, as it swayed from side to side. Then it disappeared in the surging swell, and a cry rose from the many-tongued which I distinguished in the awful words, "Blaspheming old welsher."

They do say that what's one man's pison is another bloke's food; anyways, I know that the efforts of my venerable pal on that day enabled me to set up business in the respectable trade of gentleman horse-coper.

PINCHER'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

"PINCHER," said the silent monitor, conscience, "this is your wife's birthday, and you never wished her many happy returns of the day. It would have cost you nothing."

"That's true. Hang me, I forgot all about it!" replied Pincher.

"More shame for you," the silent monitor replied. "You've been married only a year, and she deserves more consideration. Does she forget you? Have you wanted a button in the last twelve months? Has your table been neglected? Have you found the gas turned out on coming home, or flaring away extravagantly? Is it not always turned down as you desired? Does she complain because you never go home before two o'clock in the morning, and——"

"That's business, you know," interrupted Mr. Pincher. "As paid secretary to that club, I'm bound to stay there till all the members are gone."

"You gave up a more lucrative engagement for the secretaryship, and took it merely because you thought it genteeler than the drapery business. You wouldn't have taken it if your wife wasn't the most kind and indulgent young woman in the world. And you couldn't remember her birthday! It would serve you right if she revolted, if she became neglectful, extravagant, and careless in her habits, and perhaps snappish in her temper when you get into bed with cold feet, and a reek of tobacco."

"This is very true, and, as you say, it would have cost me nothing to wish her many happy returns of the day. A kind word or two are more to an affectionate wife than costly gifts."

"When they are spoken in season. It's no good stopping here now, and thinking of going back. She won't forget that you have neglected her. The thing's done, and you must put up with the consequences."

"Confound my memory. She looked expectant even when she bade me good-bye."

"Possibly she thought you intended to surprise her by some little present—sent later on in the day."



"I might do that, to be sure. What could I send her? A dress—hem! When they're ready-made they never fit, and when they're not made up it costs about ten times as much as they're worth to make 'em up. There'd be a dress-maker's bill as long as my arm."

"What do you say to a bonnet?"

"Oh! I know what that means—she'd want a dress to go with it. It wouldn't match anything she has. They never do."

"Set of trinkets—ear-rings—bracelets?"

"No, I don't quite like gew-gaws. They're expensive, and they encourage vanity. She'd want to have a party to show 'em off, or go flaunting about to be seen. No, I don't think I care for trinkets."

"Hasn't she expressed a desire for any particular thing?"

"Ah! I remember. She begged me to order a ton of coals."

"Fool, would you send coals as a present?"

"I have it. I'll send her a pot of flowers, or a little nosegay. Sentiment, you know. No woman could object to flowers, and they're not expensive. I'll run through Covent Garden at once. Happy thought."

* * * * *

"How much is that bouquet, miss?" asked Mr. Pincher of the young woman who was arranging flowers in Signor Panzi's shop.

Signor Panzi was in the counting-house adjoining, and the door was open; so the young woman, instead of giving an offhand answer—which Mr. Pincher expected

to receive—rose from her seat, and hied to serve the customer.

"That bouquet, sir?" said she, wedging herself artfully between the door and Mr. Pincher, and so cutting off his retreat. "That bouquet is a guinea and a half."

"A guinea and a half! Dear me. Ah! very pretty, thank you." Mr. Pincher looked as if he wished to get out of the shop.

"You don't think it expensive, sir, surely," said the young person. "The flowers are all freshly cut, and it has only been made up half-an-hour."

"Oh, it's not dear. Oh, no. But, you see, it's not for myself."

"Of course not, sir. Gentlemen don't buy bouquets for themselves."

"Just so, but what I mean——"

"I'm sure, sir, you won't begrudge the money for a present to a young lady."

"Oh, it isn't for a young lady—not for an unmarried young lady, you know. It's for a married lady."

The young woman looked at Mr. Pincher incredulously for a moment, as one accustomed to subterfuges, and then, finding from something in his demeanour that he was actually telling the truth, she said:—

"If it's only for a married lady, sir, I could find you something suitable for about ten shillings."

"Ten shillings! That's more like the price I thought of paying. You think at that figure you could find something good enough?"

"Is it for your own wife or somebody else's?" asked the young woman, pausing with her hand on a box.

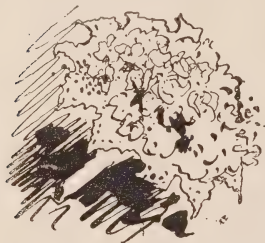
"My own."

"Then I'm pretty sure I have the article to suit you," and the young woman opened a box, and displayed a dozen bouquets—a little bruised here and there, and somewhat



brown about the edges of the petals, but still respectable in appearance. "There, sir," said she, "you can take your choice at ten shillings a time."

"I'm sure they look almost as good as the others," said Mr. Pincher, in delight.



"They were made up yesterday—that is the only difference."

"Then I'll take this. You will send it home?"

"Yes, sir. Sixpence for the box, and sixpence for carriage, if you please. What name?"

"Mrs. Pincher, The Terrace, South Brompton."

"Will you send your card with it?"

"No, miss, I intend it as a little surprise."

"Ah! Just so. The boy shall take it at once."

* * * * *

"Well," said Mr. Pincher, as he turned up the gas, "considering I sent my wife that bouquet, I think she might have sat up to thank me for it—coming home after a fatiguing night's work."

"How did she know you sent the bouquet? You didn't enclose your card," said the silent monitor.

"Good gracious! She knows well enough it came from me. No one else would send her a bouquet. The idea of such a thing."

"In that case, I don't know why you pretended to make a surprise of it by sending it anonymously."

"Oh, that's no matter. I shall find it in the drawing-room, set in a vase."

"Perhaps."

* * * * *

"This is odd," said Mr. Pincher, looking round the room, and scratching his ear thoughtfully. "No flowers, and the fire out, and my slippers pitched into a corner. This is gratitude, this is!"

"Possibly," suggested the silent monitor, "the flowers were not sent home, and your wife, indignant at your neglect, has adopted that course of recrimination I suggested this morning."

"Ah! very likely. Well, it will pile coals of fire on her head when the flowers do arrive, and she finds how hasty and unjust she has been."

"Perhaps," reiterated the silent monitor.

"Confounded cold, and my feet like stones! Devil take that girl for not sending home the bouquet, and I paid sixpence for the carriage! My feet are numbed with cold. What on earth shall I do to warm 'em?"

"Go down in the kitchen, and rub 'em on the boiler."

* * * * *

"Hallo! what's that little box on the dresser?" exclaimed Mr. Pincher.

"Looks like the box your bouquet was put into," replied the silent monitor.

"It is, by George! I could swear to it! Here's the florist's address stamped on the bottom. 'Panzi, Central Avenue, Covent Garden.' The blacking-brushes inside, and I paid sixpence for it!"

"Your wife finds a use for everything."

"But a gift of sentiment to be treated thus."

"There's no sentiment in a box."

"No, but there's blacking-brushes. Now what does that imply?"

"That your wife has received your gift."

"What, and pitched my slippers up in the corner?"

"How could she know you sent her a bouquet? It's not like you to do so."

"Then who does send her bouquets?"

"Ah!!"

"She has been careful to remove the address from the box. Hum! If I don't find that bouquet in her bedroom, I shall think that there is something suspicious in this."

"Very naturally."

* * * * *

"Now this is the first time Mrs. Pincher has ever turned



the bedroom gas out," said Mr. Pincher. "What does that indicate?"

"That you'll have to light it," said the silent monitor.

"Still breathing heavily! That match made noise enough to wake the house up. She must be feigning sleep. No sign of the bouquet. She's right on the edge of the bed. That's unusual."

"She perhaps expected your feet would be cold."

"No bouquet anywhere. Cost me ten shillings—eleven with the box and the carriage. No sign of it. I must sit down and reason this out. If she is no longer faithful to me—oh, my stars!"

"Don't be violent."

"No, I will proceed circumspectly. Why has she concealed the bouquet, for concealed it is?"

"Because she thought, probably, that it would annoy you to see it."

"Then she did not imagine I sent it?"

"Certainly not."

"If she has concealed one she might have concealed half-a-dozen—ten—twenty——"

"Fifty, perhaps."

"Why not a hundred?"

"Don't lose your temper."

"No, I won't. She never complained at my late hours."

"She found in that nothing to complain of."

"She was happy in my absence."

"It is to be hoped so."

"Yes, very much to be hoped. Where does she hide her love tokens—perfidious Mary Anne? Ah! I remember stipulating that if by chance I left my keys about she would never go to the top drawer in the sideboard; and I promised her I would never open her Japanese cabinet."

"Yes; and you talked about mutual trust and confidence. Yet you knew all the time that her cabinet was empty, and that your drawer contained souvenirs that you would not like to have seen."

"That's neither here nor there. Where does she keep the key of her cabinet? On this bunch, perhaps."

"Remember your promise," said the monitor.

"Go to the devil!" retorted Mr. Pincher, and he opened the cabinet noiselessly. "What's this?"

"A letter, apparently."

"A love-letter. Let me read: 'If little Jolie-jambe will accept the accompanying bouquet, and be at the usual trysting-place at half-past eleven to-night, she will top up the felicity of her adoring masher, JOHNNIE.' Jolie-jambe—who's that?"

"Your wife, clearly."

"How has Johnnie Masher come to give her this detestable name?"

"Ah!!"

"Usual trysting-place! Eleven o'clock! Adoring Masher! Fury!"

"Be calm."

"I will. Thank heavens here's a coat of arms on the paper—a kettle proper on the tail of a cat rampant. Whose device is that? I'll overhaul Debrett, and track the villain, if I sit up all night at it."

"Do."



* * *
"Lord Caton de Kytte, I believe?" This was the next morning, at Lord Kytte's chambers.

"That is my name. And yours?"

"Richard Pincher."

"Well, Mr. Pincher, what can I do for you?"

"Will you have the goodness, my lord, to tell me if that letter was written by you?"

"Certainly. Yes; this letter was written by me."

"I am much obliged. Allow me to inform you, my lord, that little 'Jolie-jambe' is my wife."

"Indeed. She never told me she was married. Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Pincher. You are a man to be envied."

"Thank you, my lord, thank you."

"Permit me to tell you, sir, that your wife has the prettiest pair of legs I ever saw in my life."

"Very flattered, I'm sure."

"The ankle, the calf——"

"That will do, my lord—you have gone quite far enough."

"We will stop there, if you wish it."

"Will you have the goodness now, my lord, to inform me where you have had a glimpse of my wife's charms?"



"A glimpse you call it, Mr. Pincher. I'll take an oath I've stared at 'em every night for six months and not missed once."

"Very good, indeed. But I ask you, my lord, where?"

"At the Propriety, of course."

"The Propriety Theatre?"

"Mr. Pincher, don't scream, I beg. You ought to know quite as well as I do—if you have the least respect for your wife—what she does with herself at night, and where she figures."

"Thank you, my lord."

"Quite welcome. Is there anything else you want to know?"

"No, you have told me quite enough. I will wish you a very good morning, my lord."

"Ta-ta. Love to your wife."

* * * * *

"I won't believe a word of it," said Mr. Pincher, when he was out in the street. "And yet I'm never home before two in the morning, and my wife manages the housekeeping so that I am never called upon to pay up like other men. And yet—but then—though how—nevertheless—what the devil am I to do?"

"Go to the Propriety Theatre and see if your wife does play there," suggested the silent monitor.

"I will—this very moment."

* * * * *

"This is the stage door of the Propriety, I think!" said Mr. Pincher.

"Of course it is. Ain't it wrote up over the door?" returned the stage doorkeeper.

"Thank you."

"Well, what do you want here?"

"You are—er—acquainted with—er—Lord Caton de Kyttle?"

"Oh, yes; he's hanging about here every night."

"I think he pays a good deal of attention to my wife."

"Who's she?"

"Mrs. Pincher."

"Don't know no Mrs. Pincher. But I dussay you're right. These 'ere mashers are nuts on anything in petticoats—or out of 'em."

"But you say you don't know Mrs. Pincher?"

"No; I don't know no Pinchers. Hang me, I should have enough to do if I knew all the haliasses these choruses has got. What does she call herself—your wife—what's her haliass like?"

"I think she's called 'Jolie-jambe.'"

"Oh! Jolly-jams. Oh, I know her well enough. We has many a quiet half-hour together—she and me does. She's your wife, is she?"

"She is."

"Well, that's odd. Nice little thing, ain't she?"

"Very nice, indeed. Will you have the kindness to tell me when she is likely to arrive here?"

"She's in the 'ouse now—waiting for rehearsal."

"Here now! Mrs. Pincher?"

"Jolly-jams."

"Will you tell her, if you please, that I want to speak to her, instantly."

"Werry good—but don't sing it. I ain't deaf."



* * * * *

"Do you want to speak to me?" asked the little lady coming from the stage with the doorkeeper.

"You, ma'am, no. I don't want to see you," replied Mr Pincher.

"Look here, Stumps, what on earth do you mean by fetch-
ing me off for?" asked the little lady.

"The old fool said he wanted Jolly-jams instantly," retorted the indignant doorkeeper.

"I said I wanted Mrs. Pincher."

"Well, you said Mrs. Pincher was Jolly-jams, didn't you, now—eh?"

"What's the meaning of this?" cried the young lady in a pet and stamping her little foot.

"Madam—look at that letter," said Pincher.

"A letter for me: I know the writing, and I know Kyttle: but I never saw this before. How did you get it?"

"I found it in Mrs. Pincher's Japanese cabinet."

"How did she come by it?"

"How should I know. It is not likely I should ask her, is it?"

"Don't raise your voice at me, sir. You have given me the letter, now where's the bouquet?"

"What bouquet?"

"Why the bouquet my Johnnie says he sends with the letter. You can read, can't you?"

"I don't know anything about any bouquet."

"Well, you will have to know. I demand my bouquet."

"I know nothing, I tell you, of any bouquet except the one I sent my wife yesterday for a birthday present, and that I bought and paid for at Panzi's, in Covent Garden."

"Panzi's, in Covent Garden? Oh, I see," and the lady burst into laughter.

"I see nothing to laugh at, ma'am."

"Don't you? I do. Panzi buys up all the bouquets I receive at night time, and sells them at a reduction the next day. You sent your wife one of my old bouquets, and this letter had escaped my notice. It's good enough for a play!"

* * * * *

"In future," said the silent monitor, "don't buy second-hand bouquets for your wife."

"Or don't make her any present at all," suggested Mr. Pincher, frugal to the last.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

IT was the first night of *Glu-Glu* at the Hyperion. Miss Rose D'Amond had just pattered down to the footlights, and was bowing her acknowledgement of the tumultuous applause with which she was welcomed. While she waited for the applause to abate before taking up her lines, people in all parts of the house were exchanging rapid observations on the brilliant appearance of the young actress.

IN THE PIT.

"Dear me, what a very lovely person, and what an extraordinary display of jewellery!" remarked an old gentleman from the country to the young man about town who had brought him to see the new bouffe. "What is her name?"



"Her name was Lizzie Hammond before she went on the boards; since then the public has known her as Rose D'Amond. In the profession she is called Rose Diamonds, in consequence of the extraordinary collection of diamonds she possesses."

"Lord bless me! What a very remunerative profession it must be. I never saw such wonderful jewels. Very nice, to be sure. Really, if it were not for her—her limbs being so uncovered, you might take her for a duchess."

IN THE DRESS CIRCLE.

"Oh, what exquisite diamonds! Oh, how lovely! Do you think they can be real, mamma?" asks a young lady in the front row.

"Real, my dear? Of course not—what rubbish! Everything on the stage is false."

"I beg your pardon, madam," says a gentleman, leaning

forward from the row behind—a gentleman, himself resplendent in diamond studs, and a couple of fat gold alberts, speaking with a slight Jewish accent, “I beg your pardon. Every



stone worn by Mish D'Amond is genuine, and of the firht water. I am a jeweller—Motheth, of Bond Threet. You may have theen my thop, and I have the honour of thupplying her. Her ear-ringth coht four hundred poundth; her neckleth fifteen

hundred; the left brathlet eight hundred; the two right thirteenth hundred; the ring on the left hand thecond finger theven hundred; the three on the third finger—three and four theven and five twelve—twelve hundred; the ring on the right forefinger theven hundred——”

“My goodness gracious!”

“But I’ve got little rothe ringth ath low ath three and four poundth, and if you are pathing through Bond Threet any morning,” &c., &c.

IN A PRIVATE BOX.

“It is perfectly ridiculous the fuss they make over the girl,” says Miss Idalia Cleveland, the leading lady of the Corinthian Theatre, to her elderly admirer. “She can’t dance, and she can’t sing.”

“And you are perfect in both accomplishments,” replies the aged buck. “So it is for her to be jealous.”

“Augh! pray don’t think that *I* am jealous. The audience at the Corinthian expects dramatic ability; here they are satisfied with a show of diamonds. It’s well for them they expect no more than that. Jealous of little Lizzie Hammond. Oh, dear no! We are on the most affectionate terms of friendship. I admire Lizzie much. She’s extremely clever in a certain way. It was a capital idea to spend her money in diamonds instead of wasting it in hospitality.”

“A *brilliant* idea, one may say.”

“Stupid old fool!” says Miss Cleveland to herself; then aloud, “She couldn’t have hit upon a better means of adver-

tising herself. People talk of her diamonds, and that is greater recommendation with a certain class of people than if they talked of talent or personal attractions. Actually there was a paragraph in one of the society journals about her jewels, and the next night the manager doubled her screw—salary, I mean. As I say, the audience comes to see her diamonds, not her. She would have made an admirable tradesman's wife. Her commercial spirit is evident in everything she does. She has all her diamonds of one man, a Jew in Bond Street, and in consequence he advertises her everywhere. I wonder she does not marry him."

"They say she is going to marry young Shortlands—there he is, by-the-bye, in the stalls, and to judge by his radiant face the rumour is not unfounded."

"Bah! a silly boy. He used to throw me a bouqnet every night, until I begged him not to make himself ridiculous at my expense. If he is fool enough to marry her, it will be for her diamonds, of course."

"Of course."

IN THE GALLERY.

"Blimy Bill, there's suthink there worth snatching. Better game an' what working the purse trick are. I lay she don't leave them there sparkles in the theatre o' nights."

"'Tain't no go, Jerry. I've had my eye on 'em."

"How do she carry 'em back'ards and for'ards?"

"In one of these 'ere little handle bags—same as what all the ballet gals uses. But she's got a bloke what light porters for her—that there young feller down in the front seats back of the music leader. Kerridge waiting at the stage-door, and him a-lookin' as if he could eat anyone as dared to look at her. 'Tain't no go."



IN THE STALLS.

"Nice, very nice," says one middle-aged swell to another middle-aged swell,

"Where on earth does she get her diamonds from?"

"Not from the treasury of the Theatre Royal, Hyperion, I opine."

"I shouldn't mind taking her to Richmond."

"Rather costly. But still——"

"I suppose an introduction is easy enough?"

"I am told one has to pave the way with diamonds?"

"Bigre! Yet—one may as well spend one's money in one sort of folly as in another."

Young Shortlands, who is standing behind, says, in an audible voice, as he looks through his opera-glass.

"The folly of one sort of fools is never acceptable to Miss D'Amond."

"May I ask, sir, if you are addressing yourself to me?" asks one of the elder bucks, turning round in wrath.

"The fools to whom I refer," says young Shortlands, dropping his glass,

"are old fools, and fools who have married women to whom they can't be constant. If my information will save you any unnecessary trouble or expense you are welcome to make use of it."



* * * * *

Glu-Glu ran for three months, and then a new opera, *The Princess of Golconda* was put up. The very title excited expectation. There could be no doubt as to who would take the title rôle. Evidently the part had been written expressly for Rose D'Amond. Probably she would be more profusely covered with diamonds than ever. Shortly an advertisement appeared in the *Queen* and other fashionable papers announcing that all the diamonds about to be worn by Miss Rose D'Amond in the forthcoming opera, *The Princess of Golconda*, were purchased of Mr. Robinson Moses, court jeweller, 395 Bond Street. After this there appeared an advertisement in the second column of the *Times*, in which Messrs. Sikes and Harpents, solicitors, of Chancery Lane, offered a reward of £50 to any person who would give information that would lead to the conviction of the maliciously-disposed person who

had spread the report that the diamonds worn by Miss D'Amond, of the Hyperion Theatre, were false. Referring to this advertisement, the society journal which had before spoken of Miss D'Amond's jewellery, declared that he, the writer, had satisfied himself by personal examination that every stone worn by the young and rising actress was of the purest water, and that the collection was of an almost fabulous value. This paragraph was reproduced by Mr. Robinson Moses in a hundred advertisements. Then came the announcement that all the seats at the Hyperion were booked for six weeks in advance.

During three months the Corinthian had produced four new pieces, and done bad business. A translation of *Le Roi Rocco* was put up for production the night before *The Princess of Golconda* was to appear.

"If this fails, my dear," said the manager to Miss Cleveland, "I shall have to look about for a new attraction."

"Is it my fault that the houses are bad?" cried Miss Cleveland, with tears of anger in her eyes. "You see as well as I do that the people swarm to the other show to look at that little wretch's diamonds."

"Well, my dear, if the public want diamonds they must have 'em—that's all about it. So I advise you to get 'em—if you can."

This was a pregnant suggestion for the unfortunate rival of Rose D'Amond.

* * * * *

Mr. Robinson Moses was at the highest pitch of prosperity. He no longer served ordinary customers or polished up his wares with duster and brush in the slack time. There had been no slack time of late, and he sat in a kind of pulpit at the end of his shop, in luxurious indolence and satisfaction, and reserved his attentions for the higher class of purchasers.

Only half the stock in his shop belonged to him, but he reckoned upon being independent of the dealers who supplied him on loan at extortionate interest if trade only continued its present rate of progression.

He was turning this pleasing probability over in his mind when a young lady, closely veiled, entered the shop, and came

directly to him instead of going to the side counters. She raised her veil.

"Mith Cleveland!" he exclaimed.

"Can I speak with you in private?" asked that young lady.



"Thertainly, thertainly! Walk this way, my dear Mith Cleveland."

* * *

"Do you lend diamonds?" asked Miss Cleveland.

"Of courthe I do. Thereth not a Court ball or reception where my jewels are not worn by thome lady or other."

"I will tell you my case—upon your promising secrecy."

"Kith the book if you like, my dear."

"Your word will do. You know that a new piece is to be played to-night at the Corinthian?"

"Yeth, *Le Roi Rococo*."

"You know also that business has been bad lately at our theatre?"

"Yeth; all the money going to the oppothithion thow."

"There is an opposition between the two houses. The Hyperion produces a new piece to-morrow. The question is which shall succeed? In point of excellence our piece and our cast has the advantage, but, diamonds turn the scale against us."

"They do, they do, they do!" Mr. Moses exclaimed with rapture.

"But suppose we turned the scale against them; suppose the very morning before the *Princess of Golconda* is produced the papers, in describing *Rococo*, declared that nothing could excel the show of diamonds at the Corinthian."

Mr. Moses opened his eyes wide.

"And suppose it was announced at the same time," continued Miss Cleveland, "that all the diamonds were supplied by Mr. Robinson Moses. What then?"

"Why, my buthineth would be doubled," exclaimed Mr. Moses.

"Then you can double it by lending me more diamonds than Lizzie Hammond has——"

"Lend you; why—do you know the value of her diamonds?"

"I don't want real jewels. Paste will do, such as you are in the habit of lending."

Mr. Moses was nearly betraying a fact, but he held his tongue, and gave himself up to deep and silent thought.

"You have paste jewels," said Miss Cleveland; "I've been looking in the window. There is a necklace and bracelet exactly like those Lizzie Hammond wears, only that they have not the lustre. But in the electric light the difference will not be perceptible."

"You're quite right, my dear. Every jewel that Mith D'Amound weareth I've copied in pathte to lend to the big thwellth. But, my dear, though they are pathte, they're worth an awful lot of money. And I make it a rule never to lend 'em without thecurity!"

"I have three hundred pounds."

"They're not worth that by fifty poundth."

"That does not matter, I will place the three hundred in your hands. I have the money with me. And I will give you a hundred pounds for the loan during the run of the piece."

It was an offer that made Mr. Robinson Moses' eyes sparkle; but still he was grave with thought.

"I don't thee how it'h to be managed, my dear," he said, after a time. "You thee, I thall have to empty the window pretty well."



"I only want them in the evening. You close at five. Send them to me at six, and fetch them away at eleven."

"There'th thomething in that."

"You shall have a hundred pounds for the loan, or more if you want it."

"Thay a hundred and fifty, and I'll agree to it," cried the jeweller, in great excitement.

"A hundred and fifty be it. There is the security. You will let me have the paste at six o'clock to-night."

"I will, by the lord Harry, I will."

* * * * *

At six o'clock sharp Mr. Robinson Moses brought the jewellery in a box to Miss Idalia Cleveland.

"There you are, my dear," he said. "And now I thall go and have a bit of dinner at my club," (Mr. Moses had his club like any other tradesman), "and afterwardth I thall go to the Corinthian to thee the effect of the pathte with my own eyeth."

"The opera commences at half-past eight."

"I thall be there in time—don't you fear, my dear."

As soon as he was out of the house Miss Cleveland brought from a drawer a bag identical in appearance with those universally used by theatrical ladies, and, taking the cases of jewels from the box in which Mr. Moses had brought them, she stuffed them into it. Then she dressed herself for walking, put her purse carefully in her pocket, descended to the street, and called a hansom.



"Hyperion Theatre, stage-door," she said, after looking round to see that no one overheard her.

* * * * *

At the Hyperion Miss Cleveland gave her name to the stage-door keeper, and desired to see Miss D'Amond. In a few minutes a dresser appeared, and conducted her to the dressing room of Lizzie Hammond.

"My dear," said Miss Cleveland, "I have come to say good-bye."

"Good bye!" exclaimed Rose, "I thought you were to play in *Rococo* to-night?"

"At the last moment I threw up the part. You have eclipsed me, and rather than suffer another failure I have determined to leave the London boards and go to America, where I have a better chance of success. *You* will not be there."

"Oh! I am right-down sorry for you," said Rose; "but I don't think I am to blame, do you?"

"No, dear; and that is why I have come to let you know that I part with no ill-feeling."

"That's very kind of you. Sit down, dear. You won't mind my going on with my dressing?"

"No; pray go on. I can only stay a few minutes."

Miss Cleveland took her seat close by a bag that lay on the dressing-table. In doing this she contrived to slip, and knock the bag on the floor. It fell with a heavy thud.

"What a clumsy thing I am!" she said; and then bending down, she picked up Rose's bag, and, adroitly changing it, she set the one she had brought with her upon the table.

"I hope I have done no harm—you will see, dear?" she asked, with some agitation.

Rose just opened the bag, peeped in, and said carelessly,

"Oh, no; the cases are strong, they are all right."

In a few minutes Idalia Cleveland rose, embraced her rival, and departed.

The hansom was waiting for her outside.

"Charing Cross Station, quick!" she said.

From Charing Cross she started by the night mail for Paris, with the bag of jewels stolen from Lizzie Hammond.



* * * * *

Mr. Robinson Moses treated himself to a stall at the Corinthian, and impatiently awaited the commencement of the new opera.

As soon as the orchestra was assembled the curtain was drawn back, and the manager stepping forward to the prompt-box, said:—

"Ladies and gentlemen, I claim your kind indulgence. Up to the present moment Miss Idalia Cleveland, who was to have taken the principal part in the new opera, has not appeared. Messengers sent to her house bring word that she left shortly after six. I can only suppose that some serious accident has happened to the young lady on her way. In her absence Miss Mattie Jamboneau will read her part, and I am sure that with the customary courtesy and kindness of an English audience," &c., &c.

Mr. Robinson Moses started from his seat, and left the

theatre in mad haste ; and only when he had searched every hospital and police-station in London did his mad haste abate, and give place to an apathy of despair.

But why should a tradesman, not very remarkable for fine feelings, be so deeply distressed by the disappearance of a young lady who had left security for the jewels he had lent, and, according to his statement, £50 over and above ?



* * * *

The following morning Mr. Robinson Moses recommenced his search. At midday he returned to Bond Street with the certain knowledge that Miss Idalia Cleveland had bolted to Paris, and a complexion as if he had been crossing the Channel in pursuit.

His sleeping partner, Mr. Brown Isaacs, was waiting to see him.

"Robinson Moses, whad on earth's the madder width you?" asked Mr. Brown Isaacs.

"Come in here, Ithickth, and I'll tell you."

The two partners went into the little parlour behind the shop.

"Ithickth, I've overreached mythelf."

"Vat ish it?"

"Thothe diamondth that the little actreth at the Hyperion wearth."

"Well, go od!"

"About fifteen thouthand poundth worth belongth to her ; and about five thouthand poundth worth belongth to uth, or, rather, to the dealerth that lendth 'em to uth. I've charged her a pretty thtiff interetht on them, you may be thure. And all the time we've been making a thplendid buthnetht with the advertithmentht." Mr. Robinson Moses paused, and buried his face in his hands in unutterable anguish.

"For heaven's sake go od, Moses!"

"Oh, Ithickth, Ithickth !" exclaimed Mr. Moses, in agony, "I've been thwindled, robbed ; we're ruined and undone."

"Whad ! Has Miss D'Amond stepd id?"

"No."

"Has she got the diamonds?"

"No. She never wore 'em ecthept on the firht nighth for fear of lothing 'em. She had a duplicate thet made in pathte to wear in common, and she left the genuine diamondth with me to take charge of. And there they've been blathing away in the window to our advantage, and not a penny to pay for the uth of 'em. I've lent 'em out before now ath pathte, and they've alwayth been returned; but yetherday I lent 'em onthe more on a thecurity of three hundred poundth, and the gal thought that they were pathte, and worth fifty poundth leth than she left on 'em, and thee wath to pay a hundred and fifty poundth for the uthe of 'em--oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"Fidish, ad led me feel the wust."

"The gal wanted 'em to uthe on the stage in thith new piethe at the Corinthian. It wath to have been a thecond gold mine for uth. I gave 'em to her at thix o'clock latht night, and I wath to fetch 'em away at eleven. To-day I could have changed 'em for the pathte, becauthe to-night the new piethe ith to be played at the Hyperion, and Mith D'Amond will come to fetch the real article. But the other gal mutht have found out that the jewelh I lent her wathn't pathte but diamonth, worth twenty thouthand poundth--and the'th bolted--bolted by the mail to Parith latht night."

"Moses, thi'gs is ad their worst. When Miss D'Amond fi'ds that you've given her diamo'ds to her rival she'll lose no time id havi'g you locked up."

"And thereth five thouthand poundth worth of diamondth be-longth to the dealerth--they'll have no mercy. They're of our own tribe, Ithickth."

"The best thing we cad do is to follow Miss Cleveland's lead. Pack up as much as we cad lay our ha'ds od and bold to America."

"Right you are, said Moses.



* * * *

In the afternoon, when young Shortlands came to Bond Street in search of Rose D'Amond's jewels he found the shop closed. A man in possession told him that the principals had bolted. In terror young Shortlands rushed back to his adored

Rose, and in trembling accents told her the news—fancying that the defaulters had carried off her real jewels.

Rose flew to her bag, opened the first case she laid her hands on, and looked for the hall mark on the gold setting.

“Why, these are the real stones,” she cried, “I thought last night they were brighter than the paste—and now I remember suspecting that Idalia came with some wicked intent by the look in her eyes. She must have changed my bag for hers, but how did she get them, and why did she change them?”

* * * * *

The solution of this mystery occurred to the young people after some reflection; and Miss D'Amond found herself the fortunate possessor of five thousand pounds' worth of diamonds, which she was never asked to pay for, and freed from the extortionate demands for interest made by Mr. Robinson Moses.

That gentleman and his partner have never dared to return to England, and Miss Idalia Cleveland flashes her dearly bought paste nightly during the fine weather in the Orpheonic temple of the Alcazar



HAMLET.

Bowdlerised for the use of families.

It has always been the great ambition of amateurs to play *Hamlet*. But the difficulties of getting Elsinore into a back drawing-room, of providing sufficiently portable ramparts, platforms, graveyard, and castle, the expense of procuring correct costumes for twenty-two *dramatis personæ*, independent of lords, ladies, officers, soldiers, sailors, players, messengers, and attendants, the fear of shocking the ladies by a strict adhesion to the text of Shakespeare, and the improbability of finding an audience sufficiently simple to sit out an amateur performance in five acts and seventeen scenes are obstacles which have hitherto been found insurmountable. It is hoped that the following version will obviate these numerous embarrassments, and meet all the requirements of actors and audience.

Dramatis personæ.

HAMLET, SENR.

HAMLET, JUNR.

MRS. HAMLET.

CLAUDIUS.

TELEGRAPH MESSENGER.

Scene—Clapham.

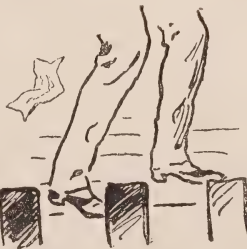
Time—Present.

Room in the late Mr. Hamlet's house—Hamlet reading a telegram—Boy waiting.

Hamlet : “From Ophelia Polonius to Hamlet.—My papa forbids me to see you until your papa’s affairs are wound up and you can satisfactorily prove that you have sufficient to keep a wife. My darling, I shall go mad, I know I shall.” My sweetest Ophelia!

Boy : Any answer, sir?

Hamlet : Yes, wait. (*Writes*,)
“From Hamlet to Ophelia.—My angel, your last wire distracts me. Don’t go mad. All will come right. We have not yet succeeded in finding the key of the safe in which my unfortunate father locked up his possessions. The safe is a Griffiths, and the lock a Chubb. In consequence it is impossible to get at the contents; but when I do, rest assured that your father”—stupid old idiot!—“will have no reason to oppose our marriage. Keep on hoping. I will wire you the moment the key is found.” There, take that. Run. (*Exit Boy*.)



Where on earth the old gentleman put that key, I can't tell.
(*Knock.*) Come in! (*Enter Hamlet, Senior.*)

H., Senior: Good morning, Hamlet.

H., Junior: I really beg your pardon. May I ask whom I have the pleasure——

H., Senior: I am your father's spirit——

H., Junior: You surprise me. I seemed to recognize the voice; but you have grown a beard, and it is astonishing how that alters your appearance.

H., Senior: But that I am forbid to tell the secrets of my prison-house I could a tale unfold which would convince you that I have no opportunity for shaving.

H., Junior: Alas, poor ghost! Take a chair.

H., Senior: Thank you.
(*Sits.*) List, Hamlet, oh, list! If ever you did your dear father love——

H., Junior: Excuse the interruption, but can you tell me where he put the

key of the safe before he went away?

H., Senior: In his pocket, and he took it with him.
(*Coughs and recommences.*) If ever you did your dear father——

H., Junior: One moment—have you that key about you by any chance?

H., Senior: Don't be a fool, my boy. Did you ever hear of a ghost carrying the key of a safe in his pocket. If you only knew the temperature we're kept at you could lay ten to one that no key would stand it. However, as I said, we are not allowed to mention the secrets—it's like Freemasonry, only worse—but this is a digression. H'm! If ever you did your dear father love——

H., Junior: Proceed!

H., Senior: Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

H., Junior: Murder!

H., Senior: That's it—most foul, strange, an unnatural.



Now, Hamlet, look here. It is given out that making a little tour, *en garçon*, with Claudius——

H., Junior: Oh, my prophetic soul, my uncle! Has he got the key?

H., Senior: Hang the key—no, he hasn't. I say it is given out that in that tour I made with your uncle Claudius I climbed up the Matterhorn, slipped down the other side, and was seen no more.

H., Junior: Yes. It's been in all the papers.

H., Senior: Well, it's a story, and the wicked invention of your uncle Claudius.

H., Junior: Then there's a chance of recovering the key after all.

H., Senior: D—— the key! If you interrupt me again, Hamlet, I'll vanish, and then where will you be?

H., Junior: Proceed, old Truepenny. I'm mute.

H., Senior: Taking my glass of grog—my custom always before going to bed—your uncle Claudius came upon me unawares and dropped in it some cursed juice of Lebanon.

H., Junior: What's that?

H., Senior: Don't you know?

H., Junior: 'Pon my life, I don't.

H., Senior: Why, that Balsam of Aniseed that your mother was always plaguing me to take whenever I had to go out in the cold.

H., Junior: Now I know—go on. Your story interests me much.

H., Senior: Well, he poured a dose of this cursed juice of Lebanon in my grog without my knowing anything about it. I drank it and went to bed. When they came to wake me in the morning, lo and behold! they couldn't do it. There was an alarm, and your uncle Claudius, without waiting to see me decently buried, took a special train, got safe to England, and circulated the report that I had fallen down a *crevasse*.

H., Junior: Then what became of the key of the safe?

H., Senior: Hamlet, your questions with reference to that



confounded key are irrelevant and impolite. You may imagine the rest. I am going. (*Rises and puts on his hat.*)

H., Junior: Sit down, I beg, sir. I will not transgress again.

H., Senior: What I wish to point out is this. Taking your mother's perpetual anxiety to dose me with that cursed juice of Lebanon, in conjunction with the fact that your uncle Claudius succeeded in administering the drug, I can infer only one thing, and that is that it was a planned job between them. Now, your mother is no chicken, you know, Hamlet, and if she contrived this scheme with the view of marrying her deceased husband's brother, all I can say is that she ought to be ashamed of herself. But wait; methinks I hear someone coming; I must away, If you have no objection I will disappear behind that screen. Hamlet, remember me. (*Retires behind screen.*)

H., Junior: Farewell, poor ghost. (*Enter telegraph messenger.*) Another telegram. (*Takes it and reads.*) "My darling Hamlet, in five minutes I shall be quite mad. Papa insists upon my marrying Mr. Guildenstern if you have not concluded the settlement of your father's affairs. What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?" Sweetest Ophelia, she must have an answer at once. (*Writes.*) "My—pet—get—thee—to—a—nunnery—go—go—go!" There, boy, take that and twopence for yourself. (*Exit boy.*) Heavens and earth, what shall I do?

H., Senior (*Behind the scene, in sepulchral tones*): Swear!

H., Junior: Ah! thou art there, old mole.

H., Senior: Who are you calling an old mole? (*Enter Mrs. Hamlet and Claudius.*)

Mrs. H.: Have you found it yet, Hamlet—the key?

Hamlet: No, madam. (*Seats himself.*)

Mrs. H.: Well, look about. You don't expect to find it in your trousers' pockets.

Hamlet: Wore I my father's trousers I might find it methinks.

H., Senior (*behind—aside*): Bravo!

Mrs. H.: What do you mean, Hamlet?



Hamlet: Ask mine uncle. My intellect begins to quake.
My sweet Ophelia!

H., Senior (aside): Good again. Let 'em have it, my boy.

Claudius: You're not going to round on me, Hamlet, are you, just because I happened to be down in the valley when your poor father slipped off the top of the Matterhorn?

Hamlet: You think me mad. Ha, ha! Where was Moses when the light went out?

H., Senior (aside): Hear, hear!

Claudius (aside to Mrs. H.): These wild utterances would imply that he knows all.

[*Enter Telegraph Messenger.*]

Boy: A telegram for Mr. Hamlet.

Hamlet: Ha, ha! (*Snatches at it, opens, and reads.*)
"Papa has offered me the choice of marriage with Mr. Guildenstern or no more pocket-money. I have refused Mr. Guildenstern, but this last blow has quite unseated my intellect. I am now mad, and not a penny in my pocket, la-di-da! la-di-da!" Poor unhappy soul! She writes in numbers, and when a lady writes poetry what more convincing proof of madness is required? She must hold out awhile. (*Writes.*) "Don't give in to your father. Continue mad. I myself am more than three-parts cracked with grief. I am Captain Cuff, Captain Cuff, you may know me by my choler." Take that, boy—and a penny—it is my last. Go.



(*Exit messenger.*)

Mrs. H.: Be calm! Be calm!

Hamlet (fetching an album): Madam, look at these photos, the counterfeit presentment of two brothers. Here is papa, look at the parting in his hair, his collar, the front of Jove himself.

H., Senior (aside): Hear, hear!

Hamlet (to Claudius): An eye like ma's; a nose that's all his own.

H., Senior: Bravo!

Hamlet: Look at his Sydenham trousers. (*Mrs. H. weeps.*) Now look at the other—Uncle Claudius. Did you ever see

such a photograph in your life? There's not a bit of shade in it, and his coat has come out awful. There's a hand. And look at the flower in his button-hole. (*Claudius wrings his hands.*)

H., Senior (aside): Go, it, my boy, don't spare him.

Mrs. H.: Hamlet, say no more. Bad as he is, still he is your uncle, and our sole support in this moment of impecuniosity. If the key is not to be found he will have to marry me, and make you an allowance.

H., Senior (aside): Never! Let 'em have it again, my boy.

Hamlet: Rest, rest, perturbed spirit. If he makes me an allowance——

Claudius: Marry you, Mrs. Hamlet? I——

Hamlet: Oh, mother, looking upon that hesitating wretch and thinking on my noble father——

H., Senior: Hear, hear!

Hamlet: How could you conspire to give the poor old gentleman a dose of that juice of Lebanon?

Mrs. H.: A dose of what?

Hamlet: Lebanon—I know all. Uncle Claudius cannot deceive me with his wretched story about the Matterhorn.

Claudius: I did it all for the best—it was to oblige your mother.

Mrs. H.: And I, my dear Hamlet—I only thought of your sweet father's health. You know how delicate his chest is. I stipulated with your uncle as the condition on which I would let your dear father accompany him alone that he would never let him go out without a comforter round his throat, and that at night he should secretly administer a dose of that infallible balsam. Ah, my dear, dear lost Hamlet. Oh, my Hammy, Hammy, Hammy!



H., Senior: (coming forward) She called me Hammy. Gertrude, I forgive you.

Mrs. H.: Hammy alive!

H., Senior: Ay, in the flesh. (*Producing an empty phial.*) Yes, owing to the economy of Claudius, I yet live. See, the bottle bears not the maker's signature, without which none is genuine. The cursed juice of Lebanon was a spurious imitation, and half an hour after his

departure I awoke from the lethargy into which it had plunged me.

Hamlet: And you have the key?

H., Senior: Behold it. (*Produces key.*)

Hamlet: I am now certain he has not come from—the place he spoke of. [*Enter telegraph messenger.*]

Boy: Another telegram for Mr. Hamlet. (*Giving telegram.*)

Hamlet (reads): “My own poppet, I am on the verge of drowning myself in despair. I will, however, await an answer to this wire. Have you found the key?” Joy, I have. (*Writes.*) “My own ducky. All right. Papa found alive—key quite safe.”

H., Senior: Add, my boy, that I have settled ten thousand on you for your filial respect.

Music. Coloured fire. Curtain.



PUSS.

A FAIRY STORY.

THE last rehearsal of the pantomime was on Christmas Day. There was to be a morning performance the next day. We had still plenty to do.

Of course, the properties were all behind. No one ever knew them to be ready until the last moment; and I saw enough work to keep me employed all night. The tone of my backcloth in the transformation scene did not please me, and I resolved to paint it over again. When I announced this intention to my assistants there was much grumbling, for they had counted upon having the night for social festivity.



About ten the stage-manager left the house; soon afterwards the property men knocked off; then the firemen sneaked away. My men had been working well, and seeing no more work than I could finish single-handed I gave them leave to go. About five minutes later the stage-doorkeeper came and asked if I thought there was any further need for him to stay.

"Well," said I, "as there is very little chance of any of the men returning before the morning I should think you will not be wanted. The firemen have their pass keys?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Very well. If I hear anyone at the door I will go down."

He thanked me and hurried away; then I was left alone in the theatre.

* * * * *

We were terribly cramped for space at the Momus. There was no painting room. The only accommodation we had was a long bench in the flies for mixing colours, a light bridge thrown across the back of the stage, and a scene loft above, from which the cloths were lowered by a windlass to the level to be painted.

Standing in the middle of the bridge filling a pipe, I looked about me. It was the first time I had ever found myself perfectly alone in a theatre at midnight, and the sensation I felt was anything but cheerful. The curtain and drops were up, and I could look into the body of the house. A solitary jet burned in the dress circle, and gave scarcely sufficient light to show the outline of boxes and circle swathed in their holland winding-sheets. It was the most bottomless pit I ever hoped to look into. The light reflected from the argands by which I was working showed the stage below me as far as the floats with tolerable clearness. To the right and left on a level with me there was an indistinct tangle of wing grooves and tackle impenetrable to the eye, for the shades upon my argands threw deep patches of shadow in these directions. The silence was so intense that I was half scared by the noise of my brush when I again set to work.

I worked on for half-an-hour without interruption, and had fallen into that dreamy state of mind which artists experience when there is nothing in their work calling for particular thought, when a cough coming from the flies at the end of the bridge caused me to drop the brush from my hand in absurd terror.



* * * * *

It was only Puss—my good fairy—the prettiest, sweetest, girl in the whole company. She laughed at my alarm—and the silvery ripple of her voice was echoed through the theatre in a weird, fantastic manner. There she stood, a tall, graceful young girl, with a bright saucy face and a pair of deep dark eyes.

“Why, Puss, how did you come here?” I asked.

“In the manner of a puss—stealthily,” she answered. “Father”—he was one of the firemen—“hung up his key in the hall, and instead of going to bed I put on my bonnet and stole out to see you. My poor old Bob,” she continued, her voice dropping into a low tone of sympathy, as her face grew gravely communicative, “to think that you should be working

all alone here, and on Christmas night." She put up her hand and stroked my beard as she spoke—for I had come to the end of the bridge where she stood. "And I daresay you haven't had a bit of supper."

"There's a sumptuous banquet in the property-room, but the paint isn't dry yet," said I.

She opened the little bag which no ballet girl ever fails to carry, and brought out a small decanter of "sherry wine," as she called it, and a large slice of plum pudding. And we two sat down on the steps of the bridge, side by side, and eat and drank, and had a merry half hour. Then I took her down to the stage door, where she put her arms round my neck and kissed me heartily. I watched her as she ran up the narrow street, and then turned to grope my way up to the flies. It may have been the transition from cheerfulness to gloom that oppressed my spirit, I cannot say; but certainly at that moment I had a presentiment that Puss would be taken from me, and that our marriage, of which we had been talking as we sat together, would never be.

I must have been working a couple of hours after my little sweetheart's departure, when, stopping to take a loose hair from my brush, my ear caught a sound I had not before noticed. It was a low, grating noise. The only sound I could at all think of that resembled it was the gnawing of rats. Looking towards my bench, from whence the sound seemed to come, I called out, and stamped on the bridge with my feet. The noise ceased at once. This convinced me at the moment that it was the nibbling of a rat I had heard, and I continued my work; but at intervals, for fully an hour, I heard the noise repeated.

A terrible oppression troubled me during this time, which was not unnatural, perhaps, after eating plum-pudding at midnight. I could not think of Puss without a vague, unreasonable apprehension of coming ill, and somehow I could not get the girl out of my mind. I had not been in bed for a week, and my nerves were overstrung by the continual strain upon them. I was in a condition to imagine any sort of evil, and to take alarm at any accident. My own nervous fears annoyed me.

Suddenly there was a noise from my bench which I could

not attribute to rats, and I resolved to terminate my doubts at once. I walked along the bridge, lit a taper, and looked about to see what had caused my latest alarm.

A pot of ochre that I had set upon the floor near the bench was overturned. No rat could have done that. The only solution was that the house-cat, in pursuit of a rat, had upset it. I looked round the flies, lighting another vesta, and calling "Tom, Tom, Tom!" endearingly. But there was no response. I went to the rail in front of the flies, and looked down on the stage.

There I saw something that made my hair stand. A woman was crossing quickly towards the passage that led to the stage-door.

Before she reached the wings I recognised her. I knew the meagre figure and bent shoulders well enough. It was Mrs. Jago.

Mrs. Jago was a box-opener, and my sworn enemy. She was a woman of foreign extraction. Scarcely anyone in the house liked her, but she knew her business, and gave the manager no offence; so she kept her place, despite us all. The reason of her dislike for me was that at one time I was rather sweet upon her daughter Edith, and there seemed a probability of my making her my wife. That was before Puss was engaged at the Mom us. When she came I bestowed all my sweetness on her, and Miss Jago had no longer any hold upon me. Though Mrs. Jago hated everyone else in the world, she loved her daughter intensely. She wanted me to marry her to save her from the temptations that nightly beset the girl. Edith was admitted to be only second to my dear little Puss in beauty. Upon our estrangement Edith in pique flirted desperately, and this filled her anxious mother with dread, and she hated me as the cause of her daughter's light behaviour. If there was one she hated more than me it was poor Puss. She hated her not only because I loved her, but because she, by her greater beauty and more charming character, had taken the first place in the ballet, which otherwise would have fallen to Edith.

Now, what was the woman doing in the theatre at this



hour? I asked myself. I concluded that she had been in the flies, and that in passing towards the stairs her skirts had caught my can of paint. How long had she been there, and what was her motive in crossing? The only solution I could find to these questions was that she had followed Puss into the theatre, and come up to see what took place, in the hope of finding a theme for scandal.

Thank heaven, Puss was innocent as the day, and neither of us had any reason to fear observation.

Nevertheless, the presence of this woman added to the apprehensions I had already felt, and I passed the remainder of the night in a morbid state of dread and dull anxiety.

* * * * *

The climax of the transformation scene was to be the descent of a fairy—I forget how she was called in the bill—from the upper middle to the centre of the *tableau*, and Puss, as being the prettiest girl in the company, had been chosen for this purpose. The girl was not a little proud of the distinction. I remember the malicious glance she had cast upon Mrs. Jago when she was offered the part, for Puss was high-spirited, and resented the woman's enmity. She had already rehearsed the descent, and straps passed under the drapery held her securely to the iron upon which she reclined, and the wire by which she was let down was



tested thoroughly. There was, in fact, no reasonable cause to fear; but my accumulated misgivings fixed upon this descent as the peril of her life.

"Puss," I said, when she came into the theatre at the hour for which the ballet was called, "I have a great favour to beg of you."

"A favour, dear!" she answered in surprise.

"I want you to decline to descend in the transformation."

"Bob!" she exclaimed, in blank astonishment.

"This is the favour I beg of you."

"Anything but that. I have promised to do it."

"They cannot force you to keep the promise against your inclination."

"But my friends—everyone expects me to descend."

"I ask you not to."

"Why?"

"I fear an accident."

"I have been upon the wire six times. You know how it was tried with weights."

"I know all that you can say, dear. But still, I ask you not to descend."

Puss thought a little while, and then she said, gravely,—

"Bob, I shall carry out my part. I will descend."

"I implore you, Puss——"

"It's no use, Bob. You've got some frightened notion into your head through working all night long, and I'm very sorry. But I shall do my part."

"Supposing all that, and that I am a fool, nevertheless, I tell you not to do this, and I swear that if you do, and if you escape, I will never speak to you again."

"Then I certainly shall descend; and, if you choose to be silent in consequence, I hope I shall find someone else to talk to."



And with that Puss turned on her heel, and went off humming a tune.

* * * * *

I could not stay on the stage during the performance, so terribly was I racked by my fears; and yet I could not leave the theatre. I walked up and down the corridor behind the dress circle in a state of mind which really was bordering on insanity. The last scene before the transformation I looked on the stage. I saw Puss, and it seemed to me that her eyes were swollen and less brilliant than usual. Poor child! she had been crying. Then I turned away as the gong sounded, and the orchestra played the tremulous music which accompanied the opening of the transformation scene.

As I walked along I passed Mrs. Jago ; I saw her cast a look of malicious satisfaction at me.

I heard the gong go five times to signal the successive changes ; then the sixth sounded, and I knew that Puss was about to be let down.

Mrs. Jago was looking through one of the entrances to the dress circle.

Suddenly she gave an awful shriek.

"Good God ! has it gone ?" I cried, rushing forward, forced to see the terrible sight, rather than remain in doubt.

No ! the girl was still descending gradually—she was but two feet below the cut.

But it was not Puss ; it was Mrs. Jago's daughter, who had taken her place.

"Heaven be thanked !" I cried, and that cry clashed with the shrieks of Mrs. Jago, as she stumbled down to the front of the dress-circle gesticulating violently and unintelligibly.



Hardly had the words of gratitude left my lips when the wire ran out, and the mother's shrieks were answered by the

daughter's, as she fell headlong down to the stage.

* * * * *

There was an inquest, and a verdict of accidental death passed upon the body of poor Edith Jago, and a few sage remarks were added by the coroner.

How she came to her death was kept a secret by those who knew. In the flies, by the great cylinder on which the wire was coiled, there were iron filings, and the ends of the wire showed that it had not broken, but been cut.

The grating noise I had heard was explained, and the retreating figure of Mrs. Jago, which I had seen, pointed conclusively to the murderer of her daughter.

She, poor wretch, was removed to an asylum. Puss is my wife.

A BOLD STROKE FOR A HUSBAND.

IT was after midnight—a good deal after—when I reached my home. It was pitch dark—not a light to be seen except the gas of the street lamps that flickered in the gusts of wind, and showed by fits and starts how wet and dreary and deserted the place was.

I opened the door with my latch-key, and closed it after me. Then I felt about on the table in the hall for the chamber candlestick. It was not there. I was never more sober in my life than at that moment, and I remembered distinctly putting the thing on the table, with a box of matches beside it, before going out, knowing it would be late when I returned. The old woman who waits upon me comes in the morning at eight, and goes in the evening when I have no further requirement for her. She had left the house before; therefore, it was not she who had displaced the light. No one else lived in the house, the idea of burglars never entered my head; so, as I groped my way to my sitting-room, I was reluctantly forced to believe that I had deceived myself, and not put the candlestick in its customary place.

I keep a box of tapers upon my smoking-table, and, having none in my pocket, I carefully made my way to the table, and felt about for it. Pipes—cutty, meerschaum, briar-root, cherry; tobacco, cigarettes, ash-stand, everything was there but the box of matches. Try again. Ash-tray, cigarettes, birdseye, pipes, cherry, briar, meerschaum, cutty—where the deuce are the vestas? Tried again—same result. Seeing that I must have a light somehow, I groped my way down into the kitchen, and began exploring the shelves and drawers in search of matches. At length I got hold of a box, and with a feeling of savage satisfaction scratched a light. I had found



a lamp in my search for the lucifers, and I now lit it. Now, thought I, I may perhaps be able to get myself a bit of supper.

Just at that moment, the light of the lamp falling upon the kitchen dresser, I perceived there a tray, spread with a napkin, and all the requisites for a frugal supper—glass, jug, plate, knife and fork, cruet, pat of butter, bread, and the remnants of a cold chicken.

I was astonished. Never before had my old Hebe been so considerate and careful. Bless her! But, good heavens! what does this mean?—the plate has been used, so have the knife and fork. Does the old woman serve herself in this delicate manner, and are these the remnants of her dinner? Or has someone—nonsense. None of my friends have yet found out my new diggings, and no one could get in without the latch-key, which certainly had not gone out of my possession.

Giving the riddle up as insoluble, I substituted unused articles for those on the tray, and finished what there was left of the chicken, the bread, and the butter. Then I lit a pipe, and with lamp in my hand went up to my sitting-room.

Upon my word this is something, too, like the story of the three bears—who on earth had been sitting in *my* chair? I left it, I could swear, with the back towards the window, and here it is drawn straight in front of the fire-place. Am I a little wrong in the head, or are these things so? Certainly I didn't rake out the fire before going—at least, I am morally sure I didn't—yet there's not a cinder in the grate. And—where the devil are my slippers? I can't think I am wrong in supposing that I took them off before going out. I took off my slippers to put on my boots, I think. For the same reason, a man to put on my slippers must have taken off his boots.



With this reflection I cast my eyes—once more round the bewildering sitting room.

A pair of woman's boots, by all that's credible, neatly placed beside the coal-scuttle. And what boots! The very

prettiest that were ever conceived by a poetic shoemaker. With lines of beauty enough to turn the head of Hogarth, six, eight, ten, ravishing little buttons, and lined with white silk, and a little pink stripe up one side. Oh! the wearer must be young to have feet small enough to slip into them, and she must be pretty into the bargain to be in keeping with such natty little boots. And the foot must be light and elastic, to stand upon such high heels. How the wearer of such little boots must have laughed to see her small feet in my great slippers. Almost I could fancy the ring of a silvery peal still echoing in the room. But she couldn't have gone out in the wet street in such things—with difficulty, and laughing all the time, she might manage to shuffle a dozen yards. In which case my little Goldenhair must still be somewhere in the old bear's den.

I dared hardly open the folding-doors that communicated with my bedroom and peep in. With the light behind me I could see nothing through that narrow opening, so holding my breath I fetched the lamp, and slid into the room.

All quiet and still. My dull ear could not catch the sleeper's gentle respiration. The room was as I left it, certainly. No litter anywhere. Everything neatly in its place and orderly. Only on the table the missing candlestick and vestas, and on the floor beside the bed my old slippers, and on a chair hard by a certain frilled whiteness with a pair of black silk stockings, neatly folded, on the top.

With fear and trembling I drew near the bed, and drew back the curtains. There she was—Goldenhair—with hair of gold indeed straying out like a glory about her head, and the prettiest, sweetest little head I had ever seen in all my life—prettier even than I could have imagined.

I sat down, and let my eyes linger on the face turned towards me, as I might have gazed upon a most charming picture; and there I sat for half an hour, and then I went



away, leaving that little face as I had found it. Thank God.

* * * * * *

How she had come there was a mystery that I did not seek to solve at that time. She was in my bed, and she should stay there untroubled by me until she chose to leave it. What else could I do? To wake her up and send her out into the wet street or suffer her to go, as she undoubtedly would if she found out the mistake she had made in coming there, was out of the question. I closed the door carefully, and sat down in the chair she had drawn before the fire, and thought it all over, looking at her pretty little boots. Then when my thoughts began to wander from the boots to their owner I put out the light and closed my eyes, and soon fell into the happiest sleep of my lifetime, with no grudge to the little usurper who had taken possession of my bed.

* * * * * *

I was awoke by a little song from the adjoining room. It was light, and Goldenhair was getting up.

"She has put her feet in my slippers again," thought I, as the singing ceased and a merry laugh fell upon my ear.

Then thinking she would possibly come for the boots she had put to dry, I left the sitting-room and went down into the kitchen to await the development of things.

* * * * * *

"Dear me, sir, what are you doing here?" were her first words to me, when she recovered from her surprise on opening the kitchen door and finding me before the fire I had lit.

"I am cooking a rasher of bacon—two rashers of bacon, in fact—as well as I can," I replied. "Do you think they are cooked enough?"

She looked at them and nodded her pretty head; then looking at me she burst into a laugh and said,

"Are you the servant?"

"Yours," said I.

She didn't seem to approve of the tone of pleasantry in which I spoke, and, drawing herself up with a dignified air, said,

"Where is my brother, if you please?"

"Upon my honour, I don't know."

"Why"—she stopped, seeming perplexed greatly, and then—"why are you here?"

"Because Mr. Jerry, the builder, has let me the house from Michaelmas Day last for a term of three years, at the annual rental of forty-five pounds."

A look of dismay came over her face, and she leant against the corner of the table for support. Then she gasped out,

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! what shall I do? I—have made some terrible mistake. What shall I do?"

"Better help me get breakfast, and we'll talk it over quietly, and find out how matters stand."



She obeyed me mechanically—at a loss, perhaps, to know what else to do. My manner of taking the whole affair as a kind of joke had a good effect upon her, and diverted her mind from the serious side of the affair. We had breakfast together, and the novelty of it, together with the recollection of the night before and the sight of my slippers, which were still on her feet, caused her to laugh more than once. Gradually I discovered her story. She had been holding the position of governess. "But I didn't do," she observed naïvely. "The children wouldn't obey me, and I was told that I was not fit to be a governess. So I had to leave, you know, and—here I am."

Her brother, she said, had something to do with horses. She didn't know what—only that he went to races a great deal, and she saw very little of him.

"He came to me last week, and I hadn't seen him before for two years. And he asked me if I could lend him some money. I told him I had only got the six pounds that had been paid me for my salary, and that as I had to support myself I should need it nearly all. 'Oh, don't think of that,' said he. 'You shan't work any more. You shall live with me. I'm a bachelor, and shall be glad to have someone to look after my house. And you shall share all the money I get.' Then he told me where he lived, and giving me the

latch-key, said, 'I'm going out of town for a week or two. You go and take possession of the house as soon as you can, and I'll send you some money by post.' Then I gave him all the money I had—except a few shillings, and those I gave the cabman who brought me here last night."

"Then you have now no money?" said I.

"None; and I don't know what I shall do until James sends me the money he promised."

"We'll see if we can find James," said I. But I didn't add that I thought it highly improbable that we should succeed in finding the rascal.

* * * * * *

I went to my landlord after breakfast to make enquiries respecting Mr. Rorke, Goldenhair's brother James.

"D——d rascal," said Mr. Jerry, the builder. "Ran away without paying his rent, and took the latch key with him, to add insult to injury."



I had not the heart to tell Goldenhair that.

"You must fancy I'm your brother until James comes, or you find another situation," said I.

And to my surprise she accepted the arrangement without a single objection.

I could only suppose that she was excessively naïve, and unused to the ways and habits of the world. For the rest she had little to fear; for no one but a scoundrel, a soulless brute, could take advantage of such childish confidence and thoughtless simplicity as she displayed. I had a truckle bed set up in the garret for myself, and she remained in possession of my bedroom; and she was no more troubled about the *convenances*, or by prudish scruples than if I had indeed been her brother.

But she perplexed me extremely, for with all her simplicity there was an expression in her face at times which showed, or seemed to show that she was not inexperienced in life, and in certain matters she displayed a vast amount of cleverness and tact. And sometimes she looked older than her manners—less childish, more womanly. And the more I saw of her

the less could I reconcile the conflicting elements in her character.

"You are a riddle, Goldenhair," said I, one day.

"I hope that don't mean that you intend to give me up," she replied.

It was a woman who said that, and it was accompanied by a glance from her dark eyes that made me think I had better not stay at home with her that evening.

* * * * *

It was past eleven when I got home that night. Goldenhair was sitting up for me. She looked pale and anxious, and took both of my hands in hers and held them.

"I feared I had offended," she said, "and I couldn't go to bed without bidding you good-night."

"Offend me, you dear child?" I replied. "How could you do that?"

She heaved a little sigh of happiness, and still holding my hands, stretched her arms out laughingly so that our bodies came quite close together; then she let my hands go, and somehow they slid round her waist, and before I could think what had happened, her face was nestled in the hollow of my arm.

We were startled by a knock at the street door. I went downstairs, leaving Goldenhair upon the landing looking over the banisters.



I did not know the man I found at the door.

"You have a young lady staying in this house?" he said.

"Yes," I replied.

"She has been staying here a week?"

"Yes."

"Ah! You don't deny the fact?"

"I have no reason to do so."

"It would be all the same if you did. I have watched the house. I wish to speak to you upon this subject. My name is Rorke."

"Her brother," said I to myself, "come to see what he

can get out of her. This had better be settled at once." Then I bade him follow me upstairs into my sitting-room, that we might discuss the affair quietly.

I thought it would be well to warn Goldenhair of her brother's presence, so I begged him to wait upon the landing a moment, and entered the sitting-room alone.

Goldenhair was standing with her hands clasped, and an expression of acute distress in her face.

"Tell him you are my brother," she whispered, hurriedly, "or he will kill me—or you."

"Your brother! Why, it's your brother who is out here," I said.

"No, it's not," she cried, wringing her hands. "It is my husband."

The words were scarcely out of her mouth when the door opened, and Rorke entered. At the same moment Goldenhair, with a stifled cry of terror, slipped through the folding doors into the bedroom. Rorke shut the door, and drew out the key. Then he looked darkly under his evil brows from me to the folding doors.

"What room is that?" he asked.

"My bedroom," I replied.

"And my wife is there——"

It would have been more than useless to deny it. I was silent.

He stood looking at me with an air of gloomy reflection, while, with his hand in the pocket of his overcoat, he appeared to be turning over a revolver.

"I am wondering what to do now," he said, sombrely. "If I thought you were to blame, I would shoot you like a dog. If I thought my wife alone was guilty, I would shoot her. If I thought that her conduct was entirely due to my neglect of her, I would shoot myself. With six shots I might manage to kill all three."

There was something so weird in the slow, calculating way in which he uttered these words that it seemed to me perfectly possible he might put his theory into practice without further deliberation. I admit that I was terrified.

"Are you mad?" I exclaimed.

"Nearly," he replied. "I trusted that girl implicitly; I

believed in her perfect truth and innocence. One day, without a word, she left me. After a long search I have found her here. For a week I have watched this house, and seen her face radiant at the window, and yours radiant beside her. Isn't that enough to make a man mad?" As he spoke he drew out the revolver.

"And for a good reason," I stammered. "Don't you know that she—that she—is my sister?"

He dropped the barrel of the revolver which had been unpleasantly pointed towards me, and looked at me in astonishment.

"Oh! you are the horsey gentleman, hey?" he asked. "The sporting party who borrowed money of her when she was a governess, and forgot to pay it? And this is the home you offered her if ever she should need one? In that case, there is no need to murder anyone, and I can leave my wife in your hands, with perfect reliance that her honour will be respected."

He went away, and when he was gone Goldenhair came out and threw herself in my arms, declaring I was her preserver, and that she would never, never leave me, or cease to prove her gratitude. And then she told me a long story of the ill-treatment she had received from her husband, which justified her leaving him. But as she had told me one lie, I did not feel entire confidence in her second statement.

The next morning I laid the whole of this curious case before my solicitor. When he had heard it all, he said:

"This is a case for the police, if I am not mistaken. I will make enquiries. In the meanwhile be careful, and, above all things, *don't go near Mrs. Rorke till you know more about her.*"

* * * * *

The most curious part of this curious case was the conclusion. A week after my interview with the solicitor I received a letter from him.

"The first statement of the woman," he wrote, "was substantially correct; the second a fabrication. The man and



woman are brother and sister. Both are known to the police, and there is every probability that as soon as she knows that her scheme for obtaining your support and protection has failed she will rejoin her brother."



A MODERN CRUSOE.

[The following harrowing fragment was discovered in an empty bottle picked up off the Isle of Dogs.]

It is immaterial to give the date of my birth or the place where I was born. Suffice it to say that cursed be the day that I was born, and cursed be the place that gave me birth. Having failed in every enterprise which I had undertaken, and added to my misfortunes by marrying at an early age a young woman for her beauty, I found myself at the age of forty-three in a home without furniture, without credit, and without friends, with three unsaleable pawn-tickets, a wife of whom the less said the better, and the gas and water cut off at the main.



It was at this stage of my career that I made the acquaintance of the Rev. Morley Coddle, a young and fervent evangelist. I was hanging over the bridge that spans the ornamental ditch in the Green Park when he first addressed me.

"My friend," said he, "you are out at elbows, your linen is unwashed, and you look half starved."

"You speak the truth," I replied.

"Yet you are intelligent, if I judge rightly by that massive front. You have received a good education, if the lines about the super-maxiliary muscles of your face do not belie."

"Your suppositions are entirely correct."

"Nevertheless, despite these advantages, you look unhappy—
you look desperate."

"I am."

"You would like to drown yourself?"

"I would."

"You do not lack courage?"

"No; but the prospect of being fished out with a hook, only three-quarters drowned, and submitted to the rules of the society for preserving life in cases of drowning, deters me."

"Would you not rather take a voyage to the South Pacific

in a P. and O. steamer, with first class accommodation, unlimited food, a stock of fresh linen, and shining raiment ; and would you not prefer to the society of such roughs as hang over this bridge the society of the simple-minded and ingenuous natives of the Pacific Islands ? ”

“ I should think I would ! ”

“ Come, then, let us walk unobserved in yonder shady alley, my friend, and see if it be not possible to arrange this matter. ”

I learnt from Mr. Coddle that he had been appointed missionary to the unmissioned islands in the South Pacific, where his services were to extend over a period of seven years at a salary of £500 per annum and all expenses paid. This placed him in an awkward predicament, for he was about to marry a young lady who would on no account consent to be taken on the expedition. If he threw up the appointment he should never get another, and his prospects in life would be ruined. On the other hand, if he threw up the young lady who had promised to be his wife she would in all probability marry his rival, which was insupportable to think of. To square his book he had hit upon the idea of living with his wife in arcadian felicity and the south of England, and sending a proxy to the South Pacific. He proposed that I should be his proxy, and divide the booty.

“ All you have to do is to find a nice quiet little island with three or four natives on it, ” said he. “ You will take out a tub of gin, and by its potent aid you will convert the



barbarians to your own service. Pay the strongest amongst them in little goes to wollop the weaker into submission, and there, my friend, you are. Picture yourself in a sweet little house constructed by the natives, writing an account of your labours for my use on your return, while the most lovely of the female population is, or are, fanning your brow with a punkah.

“ I am your man. One stipulation I make, and that is all, ” said I, with a thought of my no longer lovely wife ; “ I go on this mission alone—and secretly. ”

"Necessarily, my friend," replied the Rev. Morley Coddle.

* * * * *

It is unnecessary to enter into the details of my quarrel with the haughty captain of the P. and O. steamer, the result is sufficient to record—I was pitched overboard in mid-ocean. For the first time since our honeymoon I regretted that my wife was not with me. Left to the mercy of the waves, I was thrown upon an uninhabited island, which, as will be seen by the sequel, is not saying much for their mercy.

I say I was thrown on an uninhabited island, for uninhabited it was when I arrived there. The first thing I did on finding myself upon that barren shore, was to go down on my knees and bitterly curse my fate. Having done this to my heart's content, and feeling the pangs of hunger sharply, I resolved to explore my island. But, before doing this, I took off my clothes—the temperature being agreeable—and hung them on a rock to dry; I furthermore tied my white shirt by the sleeves to a small tree on an eminence, as a signal of distress to any ship that might be passing that way. I then walked round the island, which I calculate was about nine miles in circumference, and having found nothing on the journey wherewith to satisfy my cravings, I again dropped on my knees and cursed things in general. A few birds passed over my head, but at such an elevation that I could not get at them with my pocket knife, nor reach them with a stone. But arguing with myself that birds would not be so ridiculous as to fly over my head unless they had something to fly for, I presently struck out across my island in the direction taken by the birds, and after walking for about three quarters of a mile, I had the good fortune to come upon a bed of strawberries, the finest and most luscious that I have ever tasted. Here I spent an hour and a half of uninterrupted happiness.

At the end of that time, when I allowed my thoughts to wander from the question as to which strawberry I should take next, it occurred to me from observing the regularity with which the strawberries were planted, and the fact that they were surrounded by a good high palisade to keep off wild



beasts, that they had been set there by the hand of man. I further reasoned that the hand of man would not be there unless the man was in the neighbourhood, and so, by inferential ratiocination, I came to the conclusion that the man in question must have his dwelling tolerably near.

There was, on the further side of the plantation, a thicket of flowering shrubs, and beyond that it seemed highly probable that the man's house stood; but, being fatigued by my exertions, I postponed further investigations for a while, and shielding my body and head from the heat of the sun with a few palm leaves, I lay me down and slept for six hours, as I reckon by the altered position of the sun when I woke.

The pangs of hunger again asserting themselves, together with some sharp twinges of stomach-ache, I resolved to seek food, but of a more solid kind than strawberries. I made my way round the thicket of shrubs—not being in a condition to push my way through their thorny branches, and, to my great delight, found an opening on the north side, which led me to an agreeable little cottage constructed of bamboos and roofed with shingles, which had been prudently whitened to moderate the action, of the sun.

A cat greeted me on the threshold, and I was somewhat startled by hearing a voice address me with the words: "Walk in cocky," until I perceived that the voice came from a remarkably fine parrot perched on the rail of a chair within.

I walked in, and finding no one there but the cat and the parrot, I looked about for the larder, and having found it, and therein a good store of victuals and some remarkably fine old whisky, I helped myself, and then sat down to think who the place belonged to.

Having come to the satisfactory conclusion that it was a brother missionary, I lit one of his cigars and turned into his bed with a feeling of satisfaction which can be imagined more easily than described, and with less trouble to me.

I may have slept for twelve hours, and might have slept for another twelve, so agreeable was the bed and so pleasant my dreams, had not the pangs of hunger again asserted the existence of my stomach.

On opening my eyes my astonishment was intense to find

a savage seated in the chair smoking a long clay pipe, and regarding me with philosophical calm.

When he had finished his pipe he told me that his name was Picalilli—a name which he richly deserved, for his skin was the colour of Colman's mustard, with a few fanciful objects tattooed upon it in green, and he asked me if I was a good Republican?

"Why do you ask?" said I.

"Because," he replied, "if you are not I shall have to exterminate you." And he laid his hand gently on a revolver.

"I am a Republican," said I, earnestly, "a red Republican."

"I'm yellow," he replied, "but it don't signify. The shade doesn't matter so that the principle is correct."

"As to my principles," said I, "you need be under no doubt on that matter, for I am a missionary."

"Pious?" he said, grasping his revolver again.

"Not very," I hastened to remark.

"Good," said he, "then perhaps we may live as brothers."

"We will, by Jingo!"

"Good. Jingo is the god by whom I also swear."

He told me that he was the native of an island to the north, living under a limited monarchy, that he was a philosopher, and that being convinced a perfect republic could only exist where each man had an island to himself, he had come to live on this one alone.

"But," said he, "we will try how a republic of two will work."

"We will," said I, with deep emotion. "We will share this little humble cot together. You shall have the bed all to yourself when I am not in it."

"No, citizen," said he, "you won't be in it, not at all. I shall have the centre of the island which I have cultivated, and you will have the periphery."

"Periphery be——" I was about to add something strong, as I thought of the barren shore, but I refrained, as he had the revolver.



"Periphery be yours—just so," said he, "You will have a right of way to the centre of the isle, where there is an excellent pump of spring water, and I shall have a right of way to the sea. The advantage is



on your side, for you will use your path every day, needing water; whereas I shall cross your territory rarely, seldom having occasion to leave the island. Now," he added, "the quicker you set to work and build yourself a house the better, for the rainy season will soon be setting in."

My fellow-citizen, Picalilli, with a zeal which I could only describe as mis-spent, marked out the boundary line which divided my share of the island from his, as also the common paths leading from my territory to his well, and from his territory to the sea-shore.

"Now, citizen," said he, "you are at liberty to shoot, knock over, or otherwise destroy whatever you find on your side of this boundary, as, I give you warning, I shall do by any living thing found perching, crawling, or in any other way encroaching on my side of it."

I did not trouble myself to reply, and he left me seated upon one of the barren rocks with which my part of the island was plentifully sown, in moody meditation.

I reasoned that Picalilli, to come by the whisky and other products of civilization, must have some sort of a ship in which to voyage to other shores; wherefore, as soon as he was out of sight, I made my way down to the sea with the determination to seize the vessel and leave him my portion of the island as a recompense.

I cannot tell how many times I walked round the island—three or four times I think—but at length I threw myself upon the beach exhausted with fatigue, and half mad with despair. For though I had searched every creek and corner of the coast I could find no sign of a ship. And my despair was rendered more poignant by the knowledge that a ship my fellow-citizen must have somewhere, since no land was in sight.

I had eaten nothing since last night, but the pangs of hunger were as nothing compared with the torture of thirst—a thirst which I should have been at one time proud to possess. I had looked in vain for a freshet or spring in stumping round the island, and I now found myself under the painful necessity of walking to the centre of the island to get a drink—a mile and a half there and a mile and a half back, and all for a fill of water, and that when my feet were blistered with a day's toiling over the shingly beach.

On my way to the well I passed through the strawberry beds in which I had yesterday revelled, but I dared not go out of the path for fear of my fellow-citizen, and it is as well I did not dare, for I presently perceived Picalilli perched, with a rifle in his hands on the crest of a cocoanut tree, from which he could get a fair shot over the whole of his dominion.



With hunger gnawing at my vitals I was worse before daybreak. Alas! there was nothing but my vitals for hunger to gnaw at. There was game about, but it was no game for me. Crows laughed at me when I flung stones at them, and the weasles stood still, and let me shy at them."

When I set out on my third three-mile walk for a drink of water, I resolved to remonstrate with my fellow-citizen.

"Picalilli," said I, in a tone of expostulation, "lend me a bucket."

"A bucket!" he exclaimed, with affected astonishment.



"Yes," said I. "My hat leaks, and my boots won't hold water."

"Ah! you don't want to come and see me so often."

"Well, of course, it's a great pleasure in living on a desert island to see one's fellow-creature now and then, but about three times a day" (this was the number of buckets of water I felt I might limit myself to) "would satisfy my cravings in that respect,"

"Very good," said he. "Anything else I can lend you?"

"If you could spare about half a gallon of that whisky," I suggested, with a joyful gleam of hope, "and a pouch of tobacco," I added, as he nodded with airy indifference—"and a quartern loaf," I went on, with rising spirits, as he waved his hands and smiled—"and a breast of veal," he nodded again—"a box of matches, and half a hundred of coals."

"Anything else?" he asked, as I paused to run over in my mind what else I might ask for while he was in this agreeable frame of mind.

"If you would only lend me your gun," said I, with trembling eagerness, as it occurred to me that I might pepper his yellow jacket, and make myself emperor of the island, if he were only weak enough to accede to my request.

"Is there not anything else you'd like me to lend you," he asked, with the faintest touch of sarcasm, but just enough to send my heart down into the pit of my stomach with the damning consciousness that he was getting at me. "Can't I lend you a hand to carry the odds and ends across the frontier!"

"I won't trouble you, Picalilli," said I, meekly.

"No; I'll take jolly good care you don't!" said he. "Let us understand each other thoroughly, my fellow-citizen, for it's clear you don't comprehend the principle of equality on which our republic is based. If I lend things to you, and render you under an obligation to me, what becomes of your glorious independence? There is only one law in our free state, and that is the law of meum and tuum. What is mine I stick to, and I shall be very careful that no one else sticks to it. If you think a yellow Republican is a born idiot, you will have to undeceive yourself. I am not going to have my property deteriorated for your uses, and I am not going to lend you things which I might have some difficulty in recovering. You are quite right, Citizen Robinson: you will not trouble me. Good evening."

How I lived, how I existed, how I dribbled along from day to day during the week, I know not. I owe my life to winks, and a very narrow escape from death to mussels taken in excess. My food was mostly taken from the slimy

rock. I had neither agility nor strength sufficient to successfully chase the fauna of the island; the juicy snail was the only creature, not flavoured with sea-water, that I could overtake.

When I was not hunting for food, or trudging to the centre of the isle for a drink, I lay in the long grass watching for Picalilli's coming with the patience of a spider waiting for a fly. For I had resolved that, in the first place I would discover where he concealed his ship, and in the second, take advantage of his absence to have a good go in for some luscious melons, which drove me wild with desire whenever I passed them on my way through his territory.



At length he came. Through the grass I saw his well-fed, shiny, yellow carcass as he came leisurely along the path whistling a savage air. He came nearer, and I perceived that he carried on his shoulder a light machine consisting of a shaft with cranks, a pair of stirrups, and a goatskin bag attached. On the end of the shaft was a small screw propeller.

He sat down on the beach, and blew into the neck of the bag until it was distended to its utmost capacity; then he tied up the neck, and, walking into the sea, floated the machine, threw his leg over the inflated bag, stuck his feet in the stirrups, and went off at about twenty miles an hour, whistling like a cock robin.

As soon as he was out of sight and I had recovered from the astonishment excited by the sight of his novel seahorse-manship, I made my way across the island to his portion as fast as my enfeebled legs would convey me. The melons were planted just within the frontier. With a laugh at the laws of *meum* and *tuum* and the division of territory, I threw my leg over the palisade. Scarcely had that foot touched the ground, when I heard a smart report, and felt a charge of small shot making its way into that part of my back which modesty forbids me to particularise.

However, the melons were before me, and, without staying to bind up my wounds, I dashed forward. But, before I was two yards from the palisade, my foot caught in a hidden noose, the cord slipped tight round my ankle, and at the same time a bent bamboo, about twelve feet in length, to which the other end of the cord was made fast, sprang up, and twitched me upside down in the twinkling of an eye. And there that accursed engine held me, my heels in space, and my head just touching the ground, in full view of the unreachable melons, like Tantalus topsyturvy, until my fellow-citizen came home and cut the cord.

"It is unlawful to set man-traps and spring-guns," cried I indignantly, as I stood once more upon my feet.

"Not in *this* republic," said he, quietly.

I supported life upon mollusca for another week, and then I again sought my compatriot.

"Picalilli," said I, "things have reached a climax. Something must be done.

"I think it's about time you did something," he replied. "You've had a pretty good holiday since you've been on the island."

"I must have something to eat more solid than winkles or I shall die of stomach-ache."

"Would you like a mutton chop and a pint of stout," he asked.

I began to dribble at the mouth at the suggestion ; then

furiously at the thought that he was once more getting at me, I cried,

"Beware, fellow-citizen ! I am a dangerous man. Don't carry a miserable joke too far !"

"I'm not joking," he said.

"You shall have as much wholesome food as you choose to earn."

"You will give me employment?"

He nodded.

"And pay me for it?"

He nodded again.



"How much a week?"

"Oh, I shan't pay you by the week, I know you too well for that. You shall be paid by the piece. There are twenty acres of ground to be dug—in all about 1,600 rods, poles, or perches. Now, if I pay you at the rate of one square meal for four square perches, you will gain just 400 chops and fifty gallons of stout."

"Give me a spade," I cried, "I'll do those twenty acres straight off, and waltz into my wages seriatim."

Little did I know what it was to dig rod, pole, or perch of that sun-baked soil when I made the boast! It took me twelve mortal hours to get at a single chop and a pint of stout.

"Picalilli," said I, "this is slavery."

"Not so," he replied; "for if you object to the scale of remuneration you can go on strike."

But I ask again, in bitterness of spirit: where's the difference between a pure republic and an unmitigated despotism?

MIGNONETTE.

HE was an old gentleman—Mr. George Anthony—an old-fashioned gentleman, wearing a stock and a high-pointed collar, a swallow-tail coat, a well-brushed hat, and a pair of cloth gloves. It is true his trousers were baggy at the knees, his coat threadbare at the elbows and darned at the cuffs, his hat shiny with age, and no longer black; but still, for all that, Mr. George Anthony was a gentleman. You could see that by his white, thin skin, and the delicacy of his features. How he came to be so poor Heaven knows: the reward of virtue is not always of a pecuniary kind.



It was seven o'clock in the morning, and Mr. Anthony had now come to Covent Garden Market to enjoy the flower show, which is open to all on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. He walked slowly through the avenues with his hands folded behind him, avoiding the rough buyers who pushed their way along, and taking advantage of corners free from the hurrying crowd to pause, straighten himself, and take a *coup d'œil* of the banks of spring flowers and hot-house plants.

When he had walked twice round the market he left it by the north end, and made his way down the double row of stalls outside, where less-expensive plants and roots are offered for sale.

"How much do you ask for your pots of mignonette, ma'am?" he asked, after regarding a row of pots for some time with careful attention.

"A gr'at a time. Oh, it's yoo, is it, master?" asked the saleswoman, turning from a more important customer, and recognising George Anthony. "Well, it's thruppence a time to you, seeing your a old customer and a gentleman."

George Anthony acknowledged the compliment with a smile and a bend of his head, and taking off his cloth

glove with much care, proceeded to draw threepennyworth of halfpence from a long netted purse, and count out the required sum.

"How much are your mignonettes?" asked a young girl, coming up at that moment.

"Fourpence a time."

"Then I'll take this one."

"You can't have that—it's sold to the old gentleman."

George Anthony, slipping his purse back in his pocket, looked at the young girl. She was about eighteen, neatly dressed in black, with a winning, bright face.

He paid his money, and took up the pot. The girl, after looking at the rest, was turning away in discontent.

"You wanted this pot?" he asked.

"Yes; it's better than any of the others."

"Will you allow me to offer it to you?"

Now an ordinary girl of her class, seeing how poor the old gentleman was, would have done one of two things—either she would have stammered out a few confused words of refusal and got away as quickly as possible, or she would have brought out the money to pay for it. This girl did nothing so awkward. She accepted it with a few graceful words and a bow.



"She is a sweetly pretty girl," said George Anthony to himself, when they separated; "and she saw that I was a gentleman."

And that reflection compensated him for the absence of mignonette in his poor room. Perhaps there are men who would give as many thousands as he had given halfpence for such a compliment.

* * * * *

A year passed, and George Anthony was again in Covent Garden; it was mid-day, and he walked in the arcade. He stopped before Garcia's to admire the magnificent bouquets exposed in the window, and whilst he was standing there a lady came up and bought a rustic basket filled with tulips and hyacinths. He heard the shopman demand five shillings for the trifle.

"Very dear," thought he, "but they are beautiful flowers, and for the rich——!" He looked up from the flowers to the lady's face, which was hardly less spring-like and beautiful. Surely he had seen that face before—but where? Suddenly the lady turned her eyes towards him, and he remembered at once that it was the very girl to whom he had given a pot of mignonette. He made her a little bow, for she appeared also to recollect him, and was about to move away, when she said:

"I don't think I am mistaken. Was it not you who gave me a pot of mignonette a long while ago?"

"Twelve months ago you permitted me that pleasure."

"I am so glad to see you," she said, holding out her hand frankly.

The colour mounted into the old gentleman's pale face, as he pulled off his cloth glove and took her dainty hand.

"Will you allow me to carry your flowers?" he asked.

"Thank you," said she, giving them to him. "I have not far to go; I live now in Bedford Square."

"I regret that it is so near," he replied, drawing himself up proudly as he walked by her side. His manner was so formally polite, and his figure so quaint, that she would have laughed at him had she not discerned his character so well.

"When did you see me last?" she asked.

"Twelve months since."

She raised her eyebrows in astonishment.

"There is nothing remarkable in remembering you," he said, "the difficulty was to forget you."

"I thought you might have seen me at the theatre," she said.

"I seldom go to the theatre."

"Do you object to the drama?"

"On the contrary, I admire it greatly."

The lady was silent for a time, and then she said,—

"When you saw me last I was a milliner; now I am an actress. Not the most popular, nor the best. As yet I have played only in comedietta."



"You will be successful in any part that you play, for you have not only personal attractions to command admiration, but those mental qualities which excite esteem, I am sure."

The lady smiled. The compliments of this old gentleman were so different to those she received from younger ones.

"We shall see," she said. "To-morrow I attempt a higher task. A new play is to be produced, and I play an important part. Some say I shall fail."

"It is the envious suggestion of your enemies."

"On the contrary, they are my best friends. They tell me I ought to study longer and make myself better acquainted with my profession before attempting such a *rôle*. It is the people whose friendship I mistrust who tell me I shall succeed."

The young lady looked serious.

"You are your own best judge," said George Anthony.

"I do not know myself. When I am gay I think with my enemies; when I am serious I think with my friends."

"I pray you may succeed."

"So do I. If I succeed I may rise to be a great actress."

"And if you fail in one attempt, you can try again."

"Never. You don't know my character. I couldn't risk failing twice. It would be too great a sacrifice to the girls who hate me."

"Would you retire from the stage?"

"And go back to a work-room, and nine shillings a week!

Oh, no! Come," she said, abruptly,

"I live here. Lunch with me; drink to my success; and to-morrow night go to the theatre and see if our wish is verified. Will you? I shall be very grateful for your friendship, for I am all alone."

George Anthony accepted.

The next evening George Anthony was the first to enter the theatre. To his mind the comedy was admirable, and the acting of his young friend, Miss Grey, perfect, but the audience was of a different opinion, and despite his pertinacious applause, the curtain fell to distinct sounds of disapproval.



The next morning George Anthony went early to Bedford Street, to tell Miss Grey the conviction that had dawned upon his mind that the condemnation arose from an organised plot of her rivals against her. He was told that Miss Grey was not at home. Whether that was the truth, or merely an excuse to escape condolence, he did not know. He called again and again, but he never received any other answer than that—Miss Grey was not at home.

He conjectured a thousand things, but could never learn any tidings of what had really happened. The play was withdrawn, and he searched the playbills in vain for her name. Perhaps, maddened with disappointment, she had put an end to her life; perhaps, after all, she had returned to the work-room, and her old simple life of toil.

George Anthony prayed it might be so.

* * * * *

It seemed that there was a fatality in their meeting, for again they met in Covent Garden.

George Anthony was entering the arcade when he saw a lady, who, leaving it, approached the brougham waiting for her. She was followed by a servant carrying a pot of roses under each arm, and a bouquet in his hand. She was about to open the carriage door, when the gallant old gentleman stepped briskly forward, and turned the handle.

"Again!" exclaimed the lady.

He looked up and recognised Miss "Mignonette," the name he had given her after their first meeting.

"Come with me," said she; "I have a great deal to say to you, and we are old friends."

He stepped into the brougham, and took the seat opposite to her, so astonished with what he saw that he could find no words to express his thoughts.

She had changed. Her dress was rich and elegant; all the appointments of the brougham betokened a luxurious style of living. She was as pretty as ever—prettier, indeed, for her face was paler and thinner, and rendered the lustre of her beautiful eyes more striking. Her hair was brighter, her lips redder, and a tiny line was pencilled under her eyes.

"How do you think I am looking?" she asked, noticing the old gentleman's scrutiny.

"You were always charming."

"That is a doubtful compliment. Why are you looking at me gravely? You shook your head when you thought I was not looking at you, Tell me frankly what you are thinking?"

"I am thinking of the day when you accepted my pot of mignonette."

She looked at him without speaking for a moment, and her eyes were suffused with a tear. Then shaking her head and laughing, she said:

"I remember. I wore my black dress, and was a silly, awkward girl."

"Pardon me, you were as gracious as a princess."

"Well, well. I was quite too awfully simple. I know I dreamt of you for a week, and went twice to the early market with the hope of meeting you. I had lost my father not long before, and you appeared then as you appeared afterwards, at a moment when I felt to want a dear old friend, whose counsel I could take and rely upon."

"Would to Heaven I had met you."

"Do you think I should be better now?"

"Heaven forbid that I should think you could be better than you were, Miss Grey."

"Miss Grey? How odd that sounds. I haven't heard myself called by that name since the day I made that wretched mistake over the new play. I fancied I could act comedy. Good Heavens, I was too intensely stupid at that time."

"You have left the stage?"

"Not exactly. Have you not heard of Mabel Greymont?"

"The *danseuse*?"

"I am she. Will you come and see me dance?"

"Thank you—I—I have given up going to the theatre."

"Well, you will come and see me?"

"I shall be very glad to make the acquaintance of Mr. Greymont."

"Mr. Greymont?" she laughed, "why I am not married." Then seeing a troubled expression of surprise come into the



old gentleman's face she busied herself in finding her card case. "There is my card. You will find me at home any day this week between twelve and six. I cannot ask you to accompany me now, because——"

"I should not be able to accept. Miss Greymont, if you will be good enough to stop your carriage I will get down here."

She looked at him with indignant astonishment for a moment, then pulled the driver's cord violently. The carriage stopped; George Anthony descended and made his bow, to which the offended lady scarcely replied.

"Does she think that because I am poor my friendship is to be commanded by a——"

George Anthony did not finish that sentence, for he saw the girl as he remembered her when they first met.

* * * * *

George Anthony was returning from Covent Garden Market with a pot of mignonette in his hands when he caught sight of a hearse and a single mourning coach standing in Bedford Street—a kind of conveyance rarely seen there.

The smell of mignonette had revived memories of the young girl to whom he had given that name years ago.

"Poor soul, I was too hard when I saw her last," said he to himself. "One should forgive greater sinners than she; and she stood alone and unfriended. It might have been happier for her had she had a good friend. She lived somewhere hereabouts. Ah! at that very house where the hearse stands. Who has lived there since, I wonder?"

A woman stood at the door looking up and down the street. He stepped up to her, impelled by some motive that he could not explain, and said,

"Will you be good enough to tell me, ma'am, if you have heard lately of the young lady who was an actress—and lived here—Miss Grey?"

"Miss Grey? Lord love you, master, she lies in that hearse, a corpse."

"Dead?"

"Dead three days. I remember you now. You're the party as used to come asking after her so often. Poor gal!

Luck's been for her and again here. She kep' her carriage before her accident, and then, having burned her cheek, she got down in the world, and hadn't but one gentleman friend when she died. He promised to follow in the coach and the undertaker's been waiting for him this hour. But I suppose he's forgot all about it."

The only one who followed her to the grave was George Anthony, and when the gravediggers had done their work and the grave was deserted he came to the side of it and planted the mignonette there and wetted it with a tear.



THE BLACK ART.

"My boy," said I to my son Fred, "you have now arrived at an age when a man should settle down and become a respectable member of the community."

"You mean that I ought to marry. I shall be only too happy if you'll let me marry whom I like, and make me a settled allowance," he replied.

"Unfortunately, my son, the young persons you have proposed to marry have not been to my taste."

"Nor have those suggested by you, sir, and my excellent mother, been agreeable to mine."

"Good. Then we will not press the condition of marriage. Nevertheless, if you

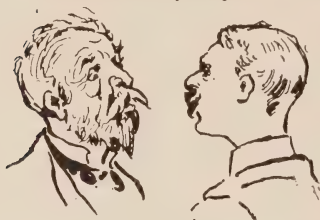
wish to have any pecuniary assistance from me you will have to give up going to London and staying there six days out of the seven. I will not support you in an idle and perilous pursuit of pleasure."

"As you please, sir; if you think commercial speculation is a less perilous form of dissipation, I'm willing to go in for it. You see I am obedience itself."

"I have no wish to bind you to any employment for which you have no vocation. I neither demand that you shall take a wife nor a shop. All I insist upon is that you avoid the vitiating influence of towns, and employ your time rationally in any study to which you feel inclined. You shall not stand in need of money, and I will assist you in any laudable project you choose to undertake. I will give you a week to make your choice."

After three days' consideration my son announced his intention of acceding to my request. When I asked him what study he intended to devote himself to, he greatly astonished me by his reply:—

"Sir," said he, "I shall go in for the Black Art."



"That is rubbish, my boy," said I. "The so-called science has long since been exploded."

"Pardon me, sir, the science has never been exploded. It has been allowed to fall into disuse; but that disproves nothing. Hero of Alexandria, 250 years before the year 1, discovered the properties of steam; the fundamental principle of the electric light was known to Homer, Aristotle, and Pliny, but because they did not invent the locomotive nor the Swan lamp, shall we say that the science abandoned by them was exploded? And if you allow that they were great physicists, can you brand as charlatans such men as Hermes, Trismagistus, Zosimus, Roger Bacon, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Raymond Lullius, Basil Valentine, Paracelsus——"

"Enough, my boy," said I, "you have mentioned sufficient names to prove that you are in earnest, and that is all I require. To fail in such glorious company is something."

"It is," he said, gravely. "Unfortunately, there are a few practical objections, which, I fear, will be insurmountable without your assistance, sir."

"Name them," said I; "I have promised you all the support in my power, and I will not go from my word."

"In the first place, sir, my experiments may be costly——"

"Expense shall not be regarded, the object being laudable."

"Thank you, sir, thank you. Then again, my dear mother being of a nervous temperament, and sensitive with regard to smells, it will be productive of serious inconvenience, of much embarrassment, and possible failure, if I conduct the experiments in the house, not to mention those every-day occurrences which tend to distract a man's thoughts, and interfere with the requisite application to a serious train of study."



"That shall not deter you. Parker shall move out of the house at the bottom of the park, and you shall furnish it according to your own tastes and requirements, and live there in perfect independence. No one shall interfere with your privacy."

"In that case, sir, I am willing to enter upon my studies without delay."

I found another residence for my steward, Parker, and my son set to work at once by furnishing the house in the most elegant, I may say the most luxurious, style. I suggested to him that this was not in accordance with the practice of the ancient alchemists.

"I know it," he replied ; "they lived in a state of misery, and in consequence got disheartened before they achieved success. That shall not be my excuse."

I raised no further objection, and in a few weeks the alterations and preparations were completed, and my boy took a solemn farewell of me, saying that possibly we should not meet again until he had favourable progress to report.

In accordance with his request, I forbade all my household to go near my son's laboratory—it was so he called his luxuriously-furnished residence. For three weeks I myself restrained my ardent desire to know how he was getting on with his study, but at the end of that time the harrowing fear that he might have asphyxiated himself in his zealous pursuit of knowledge led me to approach within the confines marked out for his privacy.

I walked with tottering steps up the path through the shrubbery, and stood at length trembling before the door of the laboratory, with not enough courage to raise the knocker.

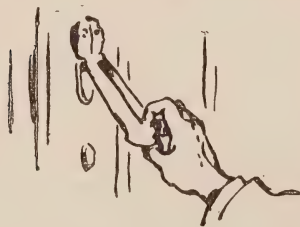
"Suppose," thought I, "that my son's spirit has fled, and that no answer shall come to my knock."

At that moment a voice raised in song reached my ear. One verse only was sung, and then followed a laugh, loud

and joyful. But the voice was not my son's, and the laughter was double. It was a girl's song, a girl's laughter that mingled with my son's.

Furious with the conviction that my boy had been deceiving me for his own base purposes, I lifted the knocker and thundered at the door.

There was no reply to my knock, but the song and laughter were stilled. I waited five minutes and then thundered again at the door.



It opened, and my son stood before me, dressed in a long dressing-gown. He looked pale and embarrassed, as he welcomed me with a faltering voice.

"So, sir," I said, "you are not alone in your laboratory."

"Not alone! What do you mean?" he asked, anxiously.

"I mean that I heard just now a woman's voice singing and laughing."

"You did! Oh, thank heavens!" he exclaimed, sinking down upon the hall chair, overcome with emotion. "I feared it was but a vision of my overwrought imagination."

It was now my turn to ask what *he* meant.

"I have done it," he replied, "by the practice of those arts, abandoned by Albertus Magnus, I have called into existence a being—demon or angel I know not which. This only I know, that but for your testimony I should have thought that my reason was gone."

"And where is the being now?" I asked.

"I know not—returned maybe to that impalpable ether from which she was called forth by my arts."

"Well, you'll have to call her forth in my presence if you wish to be believed, my boy," said I, with marked incredulity.

"Oh, I dare not: I cannot trifle with the awful power I possess."

"I'm not afraid," said I; "tell me how it's done and I'll do it."

"As you will, sir," he replied, "but the consequences be upon your own head."

He led me into a room, the only one which was not furnished sumptuously—and closed the door. A tripod stood in the middle, an arm chair was before it. Some embers glowed, to my astonishment, in the brazier. He bade me sit on the chair, and, putting a pair of bellows in my hands, told me to blow the fire.

I did so while he prepared a mixture with a pestle and mortar, turning from time to time to look at me and shake his head sorrowfully. But I was not to be over-awed



by such shallow trickery, and when the charcoal was well alight I told him to look sharp with his mixture.

He brought me a yellow powder in an agate cup.

"Father," said he, with simulated emotion, "I beg you to reflect. The consequences may be more serious than you anticipate. Give up this project while yet there is time."

"Not I, my boy," I replied. "I'll see this experiment through, and then I'll talk about the consequences afterwards."

"You insist?"

"I do. Tell me what to do and I'll do it."

"One moment, sir. You must exonerate me from the responsibility of an act which is entirely voluntary on your part. You must write that down and sign it."

"Oh, I'll do that," I answered, readily, for I would not leave him any loophole to escape by.

He gave me paper and pen and I wrote the declaration he required. He took the paper, and then, putting the cup in my hand, he said,

"All you have to do is to put a pinch of this compound upon the hot coals every thirty seconds for an hour."

I put the cup between my knee, and held my watch with one hand, while with the other I prepared to use the powder as he directed.

"Where are you going?" I asked, as he bowed and went to the door with his hands over his face.

"Anywhere from this accursed room. Farewell, father."

"Farewell, my boy. You'll come back when you want money, won't you?"

He did not reply, and I threw the first pinch of powder gaily into the brazier as he closed the door.

That powder must have been sulphur and nothing else, The stench was intolerable, as the fumes rose every half minute from the fire. But I persevered, knowing that if I failed to comply strictly with my son's directions he could get out of the scrape—until a drowsiness crept over me, and quite unconsciously I dropped asleep. When I returned to consciousness the fire was out, a fresh breeze was blowing through the room, and turning my head I perceived a young lady dressed in the height of the present fashion seated by the window.

She was singing the same air I had heard before, but with no intelligible words. As I started from my seat she ceased, and then, as if tickled by my expression of surprise, she fell into a long fit of laughter.

"What does this farce signify, madam?" I asked, indignantly.

She ceased to laugh, and looked at me with an air of wondering simplicity. Then she smiled and nodded.



"I am not to be fooled by a trick of this kind," I exclaimed angrily.

She listened attentively, and then, as if impelled by the appearance of anger in my face which she was at a loss to comprehend, she came towards me, and putting her hand on my arm, smoothed my cheek with her soft and delicate fingers.

It was the pretty manner of a child, combined with the graceful fascination of a woman, and somehow, despite my consciousness of being duped, I ceased to feel irritation.

"Come," said I, "don't let us have any nonsense. You may as well confess everything, and give up playing a farce that is absurdity itself."

Seeing me more amiable she ceased to look troubled, and, putting her face against my shoulder, murmured some words that had no sense to my ear.

Then it struck me that she might be deaf and dumb. Recalling the signs as well as I could, I spelt out on my fingers, "Are you a deaf mute?" She watched me with the drollest air of perplexity, and, when I ceased to touch my fingers, she took my hands and looked at them as if to divine the meaning of what I had been doing. I threw myself in a chair wondering what I was to do. My son had gone away and left me with this little actress who played her part so well that no one could believe her guilty of sinister purpose. What was I to do with her?

At that moment there was a knock at the door. I flew to open it. My son stood there.

"Father," said he, "I cannot leave you to your fate without a final effort for your salvation. Have you called that being into existence?"

"I don't know about calling her into existence, but she's there."

"And what are you going to do with her now!"

"Hand her over to the police," said I, hoping to intimidate him.

"They will not take her without an explanation."

"They shall have it."

"And do you think anyone will believe you. They will say you are mad to talk of raising her out of a brazier with a pinch of sulphur."

This frightened me.

"And then my excellent mother," he pursued, "do you think she will believe you? I'm afraid, sir, you have brought upon your head all the frightful consequences I anticipated."

"Well," said I, "you have been clever enough to get me into this scrape, I suppose you'll be good enough to get me out of it."

"With your sanction, sir."

"D——n this nonsense, you young hypocrite; what do you propose?"

"To oblige you, sir, I will consent to introduce the young lady to my excellent mother as your daughter-in-law, and we will say nothing about your little experiment in the black art."

And so I was entrapped into recognising as my daughter the young lady who had been three months his wife.



THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS.

(A Story told to the Fiend.)

It was not Miss Booth, but it was a young lady very much like her, who, being convinced that all the sinful doings in this pleasant world emanated direct from the old gentleman, conceived the bold idea of converting him, and suppressing vice for evermore.

To interview the Fiend was not difficult; the secret of raising him she had learnt from her aged nurse. All she had to do was to say grace before meat backwards, whistle the articles of her belief, turn three somersaults on a tea-tray, calling him by name at each turn, and there he stood. But to get him to stay and be converted was another matter. The moment she opened her lips to preach he picked up his fork, threw his tail over his arm, and made for the key-hole.

"Stop," said she, "I have something to tell you."

"Sermon?" he asked.

"No," she replied, seeing that he must be humoured—"a nice little story."

"Well, let's have your story. But, mind, if you pitch in any morality, I'm off, and you may turn somersaults till you're as giddy as a buzzard before I come up again to see you."

Thus cautioned, the young lady resolved to be as interesting as she could, that she might persuade her dusky acquaintance to listen on a future occasion to something more serious, and so insidiously to come over him.

The Fiend seated himself on the top bar of the fire-place, and the young lady commenced thus:—



"Once upon a time there was a gentleman named Jones, and he was envied by all who knew him. He had a comfortable home, a most eligible semi-detached residence consisting of six rooms, with kitchen, scullery, and the usual offices, with a garden before and behind, a balance at the bank, a well-stocked wardrobe of good clothes, excellent health, and he kept a buggy. But with all these blessings, Mr. Jones was unhappy, and the reason of his unhappiness was this—he was not content."

"Excuse the interruption," said the Fiend, "but who the dickens can be happy if he's discontented?"

"My friend," replied the young lady, "I am not a Casuist, but it is as plain as the tail on your back that all unhappiness arises from the vice of discontent. Thus, a good man may be contented with very little, while a bad man may be discontented with ever so much. To be truly happy, a man has only to correct this vice, as I intend my story shall show, in order that you may see how much happier you might be if, instead of dragging down to perdition 999 out of every thousand mortals, you were content to——"

"Let us proceed with the story, my dear," said the Fiend, with an irritable flick of his tail that sent half the fire up the chimney.

"Mr. Jones was a strictly moral gentleman, and that there might be no occasion for scandal in his home, he entrusted the domestic economy to an elderly female whose name was Mrs. Moggs. Mrs. M. was a most estimable woman; but



subject in the damp weather to attacks of rheumatism, which confined her to her room. At these times, she obtained the assistance of her niece Kitty, a young and vivacious female, of whose character I do not know sufficient to speak with certainty.

"Now, I cannot tell what there was in this common young person to excite confidence, but certain it is that one day, when Mr. Jones was sitting before his fire, more gloomy and discontented with things in general than usual, he turned to Kitty, who had come in, with his permission, to remove the breakfast-things from the table, and said he:—

"I cannot tell you what is the matter with me, Kitty. I am forty-five and a bachelor. I have five thousand pounds in Consols, I have two thousand in Amalgamated Bombays, and four thousand in Timbuctoo trams; I have this freehold property, consisting of a house and garden with the ordinary dependencies; I have a horse and a buggy, and I took a pill for my liver the night before last, yet I am not content. Can you tell me what mortal man can want more than I have?"

"Well, sir," replied Kitty, setting down her tray and bending her head over the table, 'there is one thing you haven't got which might make you content.'

"And what is that, Kitty?" asked Mr. Jones, turning about in eager excitement.

"Well, sir—" said Kitty, and then she stopped, and blushed, and laughed, and bent her head lower than ever.

"What is it, my good girl; for heaven's sake tell me—tell me as you love me.'

"Oh, dear, Mr. Jones—as I love you.'

"As you respect me, I should have said, Kitty. Now out with it.'

"Well, sir," said Kitty, 'you haven't got a wife, and I never knew a nice gentleman that was ever quite content till he'd provided himself with one.'

"God bless me," exclaimed Mr. Jones, 'I never thought of that. You are a very clever girl to think of it, Kitty, and there's half a sovereign for the suggestion.'

"You may keep your half sovereign," retorted Kitty, who was a pert and impudent hussy when her temper was ruffled, and snatching up the tray she whisked out of the room, dropped the things down the kitchen stairs, and shut herself up in her room, to have a good cry all the afternoon.



"Now, what have I done to provoke all this?" wondered Mr. Jones.

"It strikes me your hero is a fool," said the Fiend.

"He was. Heroes generally are. But this story is to show how he was cured of his folly."

"Let's have it. But come to the point pretty sharp if you want me to stay."

"Mr. Jones now looked about for a wife, and after asking all his friends if they knew of an eligible widow, he at length discovered one to his taste."

"What the brimstone did he want a widow for?" asked the Fiend.

"Mr. Jones wished to give marriage a fair trial, and said he should prefer a wife who was used to the business."

"You are improving, my dear," said the Fiend, with an approving smile; "go on, your story begins to interest me much."

"Well, Mr. Jones had not been married a week when, as he was sitting with his wife in the parlour, an old lady, with half a dozen bandboxes, burst into the room, and crying, 'Eliza, my love, come to your mother's arms,' took Mrs. Jones to her bosom.

"What is this?" exclaimed Mr. Jones, in astonishment.

"A pleasant little surprise for you, love," replied Mrs. Jones; "marriage is dull without something of this kind to break the monotony, so I have said nothing to you hitherto of my dear mother, who has kindly consented to come and live with us."

"Your father is coming to-morrow, dear," said Mrs. Jones' mamma.

"Oh, won't that be nice!" cried Mrs. Jones; "we shall be such a united family."



"And they became, indeed, a most united family, for not only did Mrs. Jones' father and mother come, but likewise her aunt and a cousin, a veterinary surgeon. And very happy they all were together—except Mr. Jones; he could not conquer his vice of

discontent, and consequently he was not happy.

"But Mrs. Jones did her best to console him.

"It will be all right after next week. The breaking up is on the eighteenth," said she.

“‘What breaking up?’ inquired Mr. Jones.

“‘The breaking up for the holidays. And then my angel Louise, and my darling Jimmy, and my own Augustus will come home from school, and spend six weeks with us.’

“‘Louise, Jimmy, Augustus!’ exclaimed Mr. Jones, ‘what are they?’

“‘My children, lovey,’ replied Mrs. Jones; ‘the youngest is ten, so there’s no danger of measles or whooping cough.’

“But still Mr. Jones was not content, which was indeed flying in the face of Providence, for when a man marries he must expect to have children; and how much better it is to have them when all their infant troubles are past. As Mrs. Jones very justly observed, ‘Mr. Jones has no reason to complain. He is past the prime of youth, and here he has a family all ready for him. Look what a lot of trouble it saves him.’

“Now Providence, as if to punish him for having grumbled at nothing, very justly sent him something to grumble at; for one fine day Mrs. Jones eloped in the buggy with her cousin, the horse doctor, taking with her every penny that her husband had realised at her request the day before, and leaving a vast amount of bills, which Mr. Jones had provided her with money to settle, unpaid. Then Mr. Jones being penniless, his brother-in-law, and his father-in-law, and his aunt-in-law, and his daughter and sons by marriage forsook him, and he was left alone and destitute in the freehold property, which he was compelled to sell up to pay his debts.

“Now just a week after this, as he was walking down the road, whom should he meet but little Kitty.

“‘My gracious, Mr. Jones,’ she exclaimed, ‘how glad I am to see you! I thought you would never look at me again.’

“‘Look at you, my dear!’ exclaimed Jones; ‘I wish I had nothing else to do all day.’

“‘Why, how bright and happy you seem, sir,’ said she.

“‘Never so bright and happy before, and all through you, Kitty.’

“‘Ah,’ said she, with a sigh, ‘you married by my advice.’

“‘I did,’ said he, ‘and in consequence I have been brought to ruin and beggary. The blow has done me good. I am cured of my folly.’

"What, sir, you have lost all?"

"Everything—and my wife. And I am content."

"Your wife gone?"

"Yes."

"And her friends and relations?"

"Yes."

"And the buggy?"

"Yes."

"And the freehold estate?"

"Yes."

"And your Consols?"

"Yes."

"And your Amalgamated Bombays?"

"Yes."

"And your Timbuctoo Trams?"

"My Timbuctoo Trams. Great powers, I forgot all about them! and they've gone up, and will be worth six thousand if a penny. Once more, Kitty, your bright intellect helps me. Why, I can start another buggy, and make another home, and you—will you come and be my house-keeper?"



"Auntie's dead."

"Never mind that. I will be an auntie to you. Will you come?"

"Do you think you will be content?"

* * * * *

"That's a very nice little story," said the Fiend, getting off the top bar. "Never mind the moral. I see it quite as well as you do, my dear. A very nice story, but it might have been better. You ought to have begun where you left off, and gone into details; but no matter, doubtless you will know better next time. Call me when you've got another moral story to tell."

THE GHOST.

Another Story told to the Fiend.

"Good evening, my dear," said the Fiend. "Cold weather, isn't it? You ought to give me a good warm story to-night."

"By warm you mean genial, I presume?" replied the young lady. "Something about dying children, squalid misery, and waits, and Christmas bells?"

"Yes, and a few murders, seasoned up with a dash of snow."

"I am glad to see you enter into the spirit of the cheerful season."

"Oh, I love it," exclaimed the Fiend. "It's so sincere, isn't it? And there is such delightful poetry in guzzling and gorging, such merriment in paying bills, and so much true benevolence in giving Christmas-boxes! Oh, I like it!"

"Do you believe in spirits?" asked the fair Salvationist.

"I do—especially old Irish."

"I mean, do you believe in ghosts?"

"Well, no, not quite. I believe in nearly everything concerning Christmas, but not that."

"Then I must tell you a little story which will show you once more how wrong you are."

"Let's have it, my love," said the Evil One.



* * * * *

"Once upon a time there was a gentleman, named Robinson, who lived with his spinster sister in an old house in the county of Berks. Mr. Robinson lived in the east wing of the building; his spinster sister, whose name was Jane, lived in the west, for, unhappily, they were not on the best of terms one with another, Mr. Robinson being a boisterous, free-living old gentleman, who believed neither in hog, dog,

nor—you, whilst Miss Jane was a pious, abstemious, and orderly person, with abundant faith.

“At Christmas time Sir John invited a great number of rollicking friends after his own heart to spend the time with him in eating, drinking, smoking, and singing of songs.

“As you may suppose, this entertainment was not at all to the taste of Miss Jane, so she kept in her own sitting-room, and was there waited upon by her maids, Elizabeth and Susan. Christmas made no alteration in her habits. Punctually at nine she preached a short sermon to her maids, and sent them to bed. At half-past there was not a light to be seen in the west wing. In the east wing there was shouting and laughing until midnight, and it was sometimes later before the whole house was in darkness.

“Mr. Robinson and his friends frequently went out for a canter when the days were fair, and in the course of their excursions they repeatedly met a man whose appearance at once called for observation. He was a thin, gaunt man, over six feet in height, with an angular face, cadaverous in hue, sinister in expression. He seemed to glide rather than walk; his hands behind him; his eyes bent upon the ground. On no occasion did he raise his eyes when the gentlemen passed; it was as if he walked in another world, and was oblivious of his surroundings. His face was hairless; a few black locks hung over the collar of his long black coat.

“Questioned about him, Mr. Robinson said that he was seen in the neighbourhood every Christmas, but at no other season. He boarded at the ale-house in the village, two miles from the house, and the landlord knew nothing about him, except that he stayed in the chimney corner of the parlour until the house closed, when he walked off without a word. He was taciturn, and in response to questions had only three forms of reply. The first was ‘Yes,’ the second ‘No,’ and the third ‘Mind your



own business.' Where he passed the nights no one could discover.

"Was he a ghoul, or a Methodist parson out for a holiday, or a phantom? That was the subject of dispute between Mr. Robinson and his guests.

"One morning a Mr. Jones, taking his host aside, said,—

"Squire, I don't wish to alarm you, but it is my duty to inform you that there's something going on in this house between midnight and morning which should be inquired into. There was someone moving about in the dining-room, or I am a Dutchman.'

"Rats, my boy! rats!' replied the squire, candidly; 'that thingamy old wainscot's full of 'em.'

"Rats be somethinged,' replied Mr. Jones, and so the matter ended for the time.

"But it was not long before a Mr. Smith took the squire aside, and, said he,—

"I don't wish to make you uneasy, Robinson, but I heard a glass smash in the dining-room last night, or my name's not Smith.'

"Nonsense,' said the unbelieving squire.

"Make inquiries, and you'll find that there was a smashed glass in the dining-room.'

"That's likely enough,' retorted the squire, 'for we smash two or three every night, and who's to tell which is which? Take my advice, Smith, don't mix your liquors, and you won't hear anything more after you've tumbled into your bed.'

"A short time elapsed, and then a Mr. Brown took the squire aside, and, said he, with a trembling voice,—

"Squire, I don't wish to upset you, but last night, about an hour after I'd put out the light, I got out of bed to get my handkerchief, when a peculiar cough attracted my attention, and glancing out of the window, I saw there, on the steps, that long beggar with the sallow face whom we meet every day.'

"Well, what next?' asked the squire.

"Great heavens! what next? Why, I jumped into bed, and dared not uncover my head till the morning for fear of seeing the brute by my bedside.'

"The squire only laughed, and told him as he had told Mr. Smith, not to mix his liquors.

"Before a week had passed a Mr. Green took the squire aside, and, said he, his teeth chattering as he spoke, 'Squire, I don't want to frighten you, but by the eternal Jingo this confounded old house of yours is haunted.'



"'Rats! rats! rats!' said the squire, laughing.

"'Rats be what-ye-called!' exclaimed Mr. Green. 'I couldn't go to sleep last night. A strange presentiment kept me awake. At

length that presentiment took the form of a certainty that I should die if I didn't go down and get a bottle of soda. I went downstairs—in my stockings, for fear of frightening the other fellows who are already as nervous as kittens, because of the things they have heard and seen here—I went down, and noiselessly I opened the dining-room door. To my astonishment the room was lit with the ruddy glow from a fire burning on the hearth; but as I looked that way, what was my horror to perceive that accursed black long-legs that we meet in the lanes lying on the hearthrug, with his long, lank-haired nob resting against——'

"'What?'

"'The knees of a lady clothed all in white, who was sitting in your big elbow-chair.'

"'Oh! rot.'

"'I tell you it's a fact; I noticed details. There was a tumbler half full of grog beside that black rascal. I heard the lady warbling low to her hideous lover.'

"'Rats! rats! rats!' said the squire.

"'Rats be jolly well sugared!' exclaimed Mr. Green, and then he left Mr. Robinson.

"Now, the guests secretly resolved that they would sit up together in one of the bedrooms, partly to confirm their fears, partly because they were too scared to go to bed. At the same time, the squire, solicitous for his guests' comfort, determined to put an end to what he considered was the

cause of their fright. So when they had all wished him good-night, he descended to the dining-room, put a packet of rat poison in the empty sugar-basin, where it looked like powdered sugar and nothing else, and then set a strong rat-trap on the seat of his elbow chair, covering it lightly with his silk handkerchief, that the cunning rats might not detect it. Then he went to bed.



"He had not been asleep half an hour when he was awoke by a piercing scream. As he sat up in bed rubbing his eyes, the scream was repeated again and again, and then his friends came hammering at the door.

"'There, what do you call that, squire—rats?' they cried.

"The squire strode down into the dining-room. It was empty. But there, on the floor, lay the rat-trap, beside it a broken tumbler. The peace of that old house was never again disturbed."

* * * *

"You are not going to leave off like that, surely," said the Fiend, in a tone of remonstrance.

"What else do you want to know?" asked the young lady.

"In the first place, where was Miss Jane? Did she hear anything of all this?"

"She did, and it so frightened her that she took to her bed, and couldn't leave it for a fortnight. When she did rise from it she could walk only with difficulty; it was months before she could sit down to table again, so shaken were her nerves by the sound of that fearful scream."

"Secondly, did the squire examine the trap?"

"He did. There was blood on it—blood on his handkerchief also."

"Any fur?"

"Not that I'm aware of."

"Did he inquire at the ale-house after the Methodist spectre?"

"He did. That phantom was never seen again. He left his score unpaid."

"Thank you, my dear. Your story has a humorous side; but I don't consider it up to your standard. Try to do better next time."

A TIP, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

THE guard has brought my bag and rugs from the cab, and put them carefully upon the rack, having selected a compartment for me that neither offends the nostrils with new varnish or old tobacco reek. He has now gone to fetch a hot-water case for my feet. He is an intelligent, civil guard, and I ought to give him a shilling. Hang it! I have no coin between sixpence and half-a-crown. One is too little, the other too much. It would be unreasonable to suppose he would have change, even if I had the moral courage to put the question to him. What shall I do?

His civility in placing some vestas upon the ledge of the window, in case I might wish to smoke, settled the difficulty. I gave him the half-crown, and now, in return, he is locking the door, in order that I may have the carriage to myself.



That half-crown was not ill-spent, for I intend to sleep through the journey, and that would have been impossible, had he chosen to admit any other passengers. For fellow-passengers are invariably objectionable when you desire to go to sleep; they will let the window down, or insist upon asking questions with a view to provoking conversation, sneeze, or cough, or move, or in some other way make themselves unpleasant. Ah! "Right away!" That

means that we are off. Now to arrange the cushions with a view to sleeping comfortably.

Hang it all! this is too bad. The guard has pushed a passenger into my compartment, and just as the train started. It is against the rules; none should be allowed to enter the train whilst it is in movement. I was a fool to give him half-a-crown. But the rascal absolutely has the audacity to think he has done me a service. He locks the door again,

and grins with impudent familiarity at me. He stands on the footboard, and says, in a half whisper, "I thought you wouldn't object to a lady, sir;" and then, with a wink, shifts along the board to his carriage in the rear. Confound him! Is there anything in my appearance to justify his behaviour? Do I look like a cad who takes advantage of a woman being imprisoned with him to satisfy his base inclinations in more or less overt gallantries to the helpless individual whom accident has placed at his mercy? I hope not.

As for the woman, all that I choose to see of her I have seen in a glance. She is seated on the end of the cushion I intended to roll up for a pillow, and her leather bag and umbrella are upon the seat opposite. There is no chance of a stretch-out. I must content myself with wrapping my legs in my rug, keeping my feet on the hot-water case, settling myself in the corner, and reading by this infernal flickering oil-lamp until I lose myself in sleep. And this is all through that confounded woman coming up at the last moment. Dash her!

She is not a woman after all—only a slip of a girl about seventeen or eighteen, thin, and passably good looking. She has pretty eyes and lashes. Not that she has looked at me—she is reading a letter, and I can see her profile as I look over the top of my paper, evidently her eyes are dark—the long lashes look quite black upon her olive skin. She is poorly dressed—not meanly, or untidily, nor untastefully, but her dress is a summer dress, and quite out of keeping with this cold windy weather. I'll be bound she has nothing more than a third-class ticket, and of her own will would not have got into this carriage. That timid look in my direction shows that she is ill at ease. The poor girl is not to blame for spoiling my pleasant plans, so I retract my previous condemnation of her, and instead, say dash the guard.



I can't read by this detestable flicker, and I can't sleep in this erect posture. The girl has drawn her hands up into the sleeves of her jacket, and crossed them on her breast for

warmth. If I had two rugs it would be no more than common humanity to offer her one. She has put her hand down and touched the foot-warmer. I'll be bound it is cold, for she has drawn her feet back from it under the seat. If I were on the continent, now, I could ask her to share mine, but the intensely stupid conventions of our country make such an advance on my part impossible. The girl would think I wished to insult her. She must be miserably cold. I saw her just now clasp her nether lip with her teeth as if to prevent her teeth from chattering. Pretty white teeth they are. Poor soul! It must seem to her as it does to me, barbarously selfish of me to sit here in a thick overcoat with a warm rug round my knees, and my feet on a comfortable warmer, while she suffers. I ought to have the moral courage to break down the absurd barrier that custom places between us. I ought to speak, yet for the life of me I dare not. I would not have her think I am taking advantage of my better position. I would not willingly wound her pride by recognising the fact that she is ill-clothed. There, I saw her shiver. I can stand this no longer; come what will I must speak.

I have spoken. Thank goodness I found the courage. She



is not a fool. She frankly admitted that she was miserably cold, and willingly took the seat beside me. She has her feet upon the hot-water case, and half of my rug envelopes her knees. She is sitting quite close beside me, her dress, her arm, and her shoulder touching mine. The rug binds us thus. I have had to

get out of my corner, and must perforce sit up straight. I can't very well read. I will venture a few commonplace remarks.

"Are you going far?" I ask.

"Yes ; a long way."

"You have been paying a visit to London?"

"I have been trying to earn my living there ; but I can find no means, that is"—a dark shade of pain crossed her face—"none that I can accept, and so I am going home again."

There is no brightness on her face such as lights up the faces of happy children in returning to their home ; on the contrary, she smothers a sigh, closing her lips, and bending her pretty brows as if determined to repress any feeling of regret at the choice she had made.

I will not touch upon that subject again. I can imagine all that is unsaid—the hard struggle she has made in London, the defeat, and necessity to return to a home made bitter for her by ill-usage. Her little bag, thrown in by the guard at the last moment, in all likelihood contains all she possesses in the world. Poor little soul ! She is wonderfully pretty, now I see her more closely. She might have made her fortune on the stage. I fancy I know the means of getting a living that has been offered her, and from which she has shrunk.

That was a capital thought—the remembering of those sandwiches my dear old mother made me put in my valise in leaving home this morning. Not that I eat sandwiches as a rule. I prefer a pipe and a flask of whisky. But I have eaten one now under the pretence that I liked them, and the girl has emptied the tin. She can't have had anything to eat for a long while. How she enjoyed them ! My mother certainly makes excellent sandwiches, but it is rarely such an appetite is brought to appreciate them. She has tasted a few sips from my flask cup. The whisky caught her throat, and made her cough, laughing at the same time. She has a sweet smile. But the spirit has done her good, her large, dark eyes twinkle prettily, and there is a tinge of colour upon her smooth cheek. It would do her good to sleep a little. I close my eyes and grunt, to set her an example. She has yielded to the effect of warmth and food. She presses more closely to my side, her head sinks sidewise upon my shoulder. She sleeps heavily. There is the prettiest expression upon her face now. The child has forgotten her sorrows.

I have put my silk handkerchief between her cheek and the rough cloth of my ulster. The movement roused her a little; she half opened her big eyes, sleepily, smiled, and then her lips parted again in slumber.

Her hair is dark chestnut, with a golden tinge upon it. A wanton curl has broken away from restraint, and lies lightly upon her smooth brow.

Her hat has fallen back, and her small, round head is so close to me that I catch the fragrance of her hair.



I don't know what madness has been growing upon me this last hour. The warmth of her shoulder seems to have travelled to my heart and set my

blood aglow. If I were to decide what I most dearly wish at this moment, it would be that I might rest my lips upon those closed eyes with their dark fringes, and draw the supple body of that girl tightly to my breast. Good gracious, I wish we were at Malling!

We are close to Malling now. I must raise her head—awake her—and say good night. I suppose I shall never see her again. Why should I not kiss the beautiful little sleeper? She would not know it, and even if she did, girls in her station of life—confound it! What am I thinking of? Am I a gentleman, or a cad? I have overcome the temptation, and experienced the sweetest pain in that little act of self-denial. I have raised her head. She is awake, and looking about in bewilderment. I must say good-bye.

"We are close to the station. I must bid you good night," I say.

"Oh, how fast asleep I have been! Must you go? I can't tell you how much obliged I am for your kindness." She holds out her two hands. I take them. We are face to face. Her cheeks are quite pink now, her eyes are full of affection. I would give ten years of my life to have her in my arms, and my mouth touching hers. She must have seen

my passion through my eyes, for she has suddenly withdrawn her hands, and is looking from me.

"Where are we?" she asks.

"Close to Malling Station. Maidstone is not much farther." I have somehow got the idea that she is going on to Maidstone.

"Malling!" she exclaims, in blank astonishment. "Have we passed Wrotham?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I ought to have got out there! What *shall* I do?"

The train has stopped.

"You must get out here, certainly. Perhaps there is another up train."

We get out. The train goes on.

"When is the next up train due?" she asks of the porter.

"'Morrow mornin'," answers the porter, running along to put out the lights on the platform.

What is to be done? Wrotham is ten miles away. There are no houses at Malling, and no means of getting a conveyance. The girl and I stand face to face in the waiting-room in speechless perplexity.

The colour has quite left her cheeks now. She raises her eyes to mine. They are full of pitiful entreaty, as if asking me to help and protect her. She must like me to be so trusting.

My mother lives about a couple of hundred yards from me. I have a house to myself, because I am a bachelor. I could take the girl to my mother, but my mother's house is the farthest removed, and—and that madness has returned. I will throw away reflection until to-morrow. Why should I think seriously now? If the girl is willing to be loved, why should I not love her? The blood throbs in my temples. When I speak my words are thick and almost incoherent.

"There is no hotel, no conveyance, and it begins to rain. What can you do?" I ask.

She does not speak. She shakes her head, and, as she looks at me, her eyes fill with tears.

"I live quite close. Supper and a fire await me. Will you come home with me?" I ask, trembling as if I were cold.



She is not shocked, yet she understands what I mean. The question is not new to her, alas! but the tears drop from her eyes as she bends her head. She stands irresolute. Bending my head down I whisper, for I cannot speak out like a man,—

“You shall not repent your consent.”

She looks up in my face again with the same imploring look; but I am dead to everything but passion. She goes to the door, turning away from me with a shudder. She puts out her hand, and draws it back wet with the falling rain. She stands there motionless.

“Shall I carry your bag up, sir?” asks the porter, who has turned out all the lights, and waits with the key to close the office.

“Wait.”

I go up to the girl’s side.

“Will you come to my home?” I ask.

“Yes. Go on in front. I will follow with the porter and your bag.”

I do not oppose her wish. Her words have gone to my heart like a knife. It was not in that tone of awful submission that she accepted my rug in the train. Then she was pleased to accept my kindness and be near me; now she prefers to walk with the porter, and follow at my heels like a dog that is beaten and forced to submit.

I do not pretend that I am actuated by any generous or manly feeling in passing my own house. I hear her light step behind me. She does not speak. I feel as though I had lost all that was dear to me. I would to heaven she had not passed her station, then how happy should I feel in the recollection of her pretty face. Now I can think only of her tears.

I knock at the door. The porter and the girl come up and stand behind me. I dare not look at the girl. The door opens.

“What, my son George! you here this time of night. “Come in, dear, do!” cries my mother.



"No, mother, not to-night ; I have work at home. I have only come to ask you to give your hospitality to this young lady, who, partly through my negligence, passed the station where she should have got out."

My mother has welcomed the girl with all the generosity of her warm heart, the porter is gone, my mother has led the way into the cheerful sitting-room, the girl catches my arm as I am following, and detains me.

"I would lay down my life for you now," she whispers, and then she raises herself and kisses me on the lips. And my lips are salt with her tears.



AN UNRECOGNISED MONUMENT.

"It was after the battle of Inkermann," said my friend the old soldier, "me and a lot more was stretched out in that shed at Scutari, some on us with shell wounds, others with



bayonet thrusts, and me with a bullet in my leg. The doctors were just finishing their first round—they was mostly young fellows, them doctors, with a jocular tone, and a free and easy way of getting through *our* troubles—when Miss Nightingale came in. She just stood at the

door, and looked round the walls. Best part of us had got a cross chalked up over our heads, signifying as our limbs was to be took off. She took stock of these crosses, and then coming over to me as I lay there near the door, she says:—

"Well, my man, what's the matter with you?" she says.

"A ball in my thigh, miss," says I, "and the young doctor has given me the cross for fear Her Majesty might forget it, he says."

"That's a very good joke for *him*," she says; "come, let me look at it."

"Well, miss," I says, hesitating like, for you see my wound was in the thigh.

"Come, come," says she, "this is no time for blushing."

"So I turned down the rug and untied the red handkercher I'd bound round it in the night.

"Why, I shouldn't wonder if your sweetheart give you that handkercher," says she, quite pleasant like—which was a fact true enough, for my Jane gave it me the very day we were marching through the park at home for the last time; and then Miss Nightingale says, 'You've got a sweetheart, haven't you, away there in England?'

"Yes, miss," says I; "and a good gal she is. Shall I tie the handkercher on now, miss?"

"Not yet," she answers, kneeling down and touching the

wound gently with her delicate fingers. 'So she's a good girl, eh?' Miss Nightingale went on to say; 'then I'll be bound she's praying God to send you safe home.'

"'Poor gal,' says I. 'She'll be sorry to hear that I've lost my leg, and I can't expect her to marry me with only one.'

"'No, that wouldn't be fair,' says she, opening the wound softly—'Ah, what's that?' she cried, and then, suddenly dipping in her fingers, pulled out the bullet.

"'Tie your leg up, my poor fellow,' says she. 'You'll be able to marry your sweetheart after all.' Then, calling to the young doctors, she held up the bullet, and, pointing to the cross on the wall, asked them if they thought they were serving their country and their God as Christian gentlemen should.

"She saved many a poor man's limb and many a poor man's life, and in gratitude we all on us wanted to give what we had for a little present to her. I offered to give her all the money I had, but our colonel said she wouldn't take nothing but a penny from each soldier. Well, sir, we give that readily enough, and a lot it came to altogether, I expect."

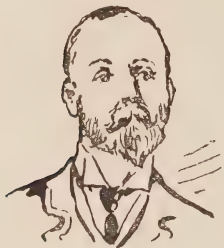
"What became of the subscription?"

"Why, sir," answered the old warrior, "they melted the coppers, and made an image of it, and set it up there in Pall Mall near the Duke o' York's column. You should go and see it, sir; it's beautiful. It ain't exactly like Miss Nightingale as I see her, but there she stands in her bed-gown, holding a couple o' bandages out over the heads of two guards."



A "D——D GOOD-NATURED FRIEND."

GEORGE ARBUTHNOT was the most good-looking, good-tempered, good-principled, good altogether fellow of our set. He was easy going to a fault—but he could work hard when it was necessary, as witness the string of letters he was entitled to put after his name (which, by-the-way, he never on any single occasion did put). His father left him a fortune yielding £800 a year. I don't think he had a single thing on his conscience to regret. In short, he was, as we thought, the happiest man in the world.



Some "d——d good-natured friend" got George Arbuthnot's signature to a bill. He was himself so loyal that he trusted anyone not bearing the absolute and unmistakable signs of villainy in his face. Shortly afterwards the D. G. N. F. disappeared, and one-half of Arbuthnot's fortune went to pay the defaulter's debt.

"Thank goodness I can live quite as comfortably on four hundred as on eight," said he.

Another good-natured friend (equally d——ble) suggested a capital investment for the rest of his fortune—giving him the clearest proof that he might double it in a couple of years.

"I'm not a business man, and I don't care for speculation of any kind, unless it's in a game of loo," said George.

But the friend persisted, and, to oblige him, rather than for any other reason, Arbuthnot invested. The company smashed, of course, and George counted himself the luckiest dog in the universe to come out with a sum of money that, invested in Consols, gave him a couple of hundred a year.

"One needn't starve with four pounds a week," said he.

Arbuthnot fell in love. It wasn't his first affair, for he

was thirty—well told—but it seemed as if this was to be his last, so deeply was he smitten. The lady was young—Miss Jerrold was her name—handsome, rich, and free to do as she pleased with herself and her money. She also had had more than one affair, but never with such an earnest, honest, loyal man as this. There was something romantic in the devotion of this man that touched an unsounded chord in her heart. She became as exclusive, as devoted, and as romantic as he. She would flirt with no one. She snubbed every one of her old admirers, from the great Stanley Chester downwards. It looked as if George Arbuthnot had only to ask her to be his wife to get her. And so he would, "if he hadn't been such a confounded fool," said the great Stanley Chester.

"How the deuce am I to marry her?" asked George. "She has a couple of thousand a year—I have a couple of hundred. She lives up to her income; how can I ask her to curtail her expenses in order that I may maintain my position of independence?"

One thing was certain, Arbuthnot would never be his wife's pensioner. Yet he was dying to marry her.

It struck George that he might make money by literature. He got an introduction to the editor of the *Parthenon*, and asked to be taken on the staff of that paper, thinking he flew at the highest game in applying to a paper recognised as the most critical and the best in London. Half-an-hour's conversation convinced the editor that he had found, if not a genius, at least a man of culture, taste, erudition, and power. He agreed to accept his services, and sent him away with "Dryasdust's History of the Tribes of India, in 4 vols., and in prose, 1,635 pp.," to review.

The book took a fortnight to read and three weeks to consider critically; but it only took two hours to write the condemnation of it in three columns. George prided himself on that fact. For the three columns he received just thirty shillings—



the price which that high-class and liberal critical journal, the *Parthenon*, pays for copy.

Stanley Chester had taken very heartily to George Arbuthnot. They were entirely opposed in most things, but there was a certain kind of honesty in Chester which won George's heart.

He pretended to be nothing but a man of the world, and no better than any other of the hundreds of fellows in society who live chiefly by their wits.

"Up to the age of forty a man can live with ease by his wits," said he.

"And after?" asked George.

"After. Ha! Better open an account with a banker."

"The man need have a good deal of wit, or the banker precious little to come to that arrangement."

"Think so? Man can always marry, if he have decent looks and watches his opportunity. I should have married Miss Jerrold if you hadn't cut me out."

"I'm sorry I cut you out to no purpose."

"Your own fault. Those scruples of yours are only fit for a novel. She'd never ask you how much you have."

"And I'd never marry without telling her."

"Ah! I would."

George whistled a melancholy tune.

"By-the-bye," said Chester, interrupting his friend's harmony, "why don't you get money, if you can't marry without it, and you want to marry that girl?"

"That's what I'm trying to do," said George, pointing to a new batch of books sent for review.

"Oh, I don't call that getting money; I call that giving it. If anyone offered me half a sovereign for a column of such work as you do, I'd fling the money in his face. It's an insult, only to be borne by such—such men as you. What I mean is a big thing, that in five or six years might bring you in twenty or thirty thou."

"That is what I want. The thing is, where is it to be found?"

"Easy enough for a man with pluck and determination."

"I think I have both—at least, I know that I should be wanting in neither if I believed that by them I should be able to make Miss Jerrold my wife."

"H'm!" Stanley Chester tapped his boot with his cane reflectively for a second, then, looking up, said, "I'll speak to the governor about it to-night."

* * * * *

"That Arbuthnot's a fool," said Stanley Chester to himself. "Miss Jerrold is young and pretty. Women, if they're young and pretty, don't care for fools if they're studious and grave—unless the woman is romantic, and the fool is handsome. Arbuthnot is handsome, and Miss Jerrold is romantic. Miss Jerrold is twenty-two, I should say; Arbuthnot can't be less than thirty-five. In half-a-dozen years Miss Jerrold will be twenty-eight and Arbuthnot over forty. She will be no longer romantic; and he will have worried the hair off his head. Half-a-dozen years won't make much difference to me. Possibly I shall look better than I do now—if I take care of myself, and worry about nothing. Then I may have a chance. Try at any rate. I'll have at the governor at once."

* * * * *

"Spoke to the governor last night about you, Arbuthnot," he said, when he next met Arbuthnot.

"Very good of you, Chester."

"The governor's business, you know, is in the Mauritius. Don't do much at it himself. Content to take a small share of the profits, and take it easy. Wise old boy! His manager gets the pull

—at least, he did until the old gentleman got the pull of him. Died last year — yellow fever — don't disguise the fact. Since then the governor has been swindled by a couple of men successively, put in the place of the former manager.



Now he's at his wit's end, like Diogenes, to find an honest man. Wanted me to go out there. 'No thanks,' said I; 'Yellow Jack don't have me.'

Old dad—strict moralist—objects to my doing nothing; cut up rough; declared I should have enough to keep me out of the workhouse during his lifetime, and so keep up his character for respectability, but don't care a d—— what becomes of me after. Declared he would leave everything to the first honest man with working capabilities he found, and I believe he'll keep his word. That don't matter to me. I shall wriggle through life without his money, I wager. Not much good to have the reversion of a fortune with the hourly prospect of not living to get it. Oh, no. No Jack for yours truly. They say the island's healthy—perhaps it is. But if one manager dies of too much Jack, another may go and do likewise. That don't suit me. The question is, Arbuthnot, whether it will suit you? In six years you might buy the governor out. Find a manager in your turn to do the hot work, come home, marry Miss Jerrold—and there you are, don't you know."

"Good gracious, Chester, what a brick you are! If she would only wait——"

"Wait? Oh, of course she will. Be only too glad—find in your proposal only another proof of your worth and chivalry. Go and ask her."

"I will. Thanks, old fellow—thanks." He grasped Chester's hand, and could say no more for the gratitude that swelled his heart. Then, turning away, he said to himself, "And men tell me that Chester is selfish."

It turned out as Chester had predicted. Miss Jerrold was intoxicated with the homage offered her by Arbuthnot. She felt that she was the heroine of a charming romance, and in a quite too ecstatic scene she parted from Arbuthnot, vowing to wait until he came home to make her his wife. And without any vows at all, but with a quiet determination to win the girl who had already given him her heart, he went away.

Nothing of great importance happened to him in the Mauritius. He "worried" himself unduly to improve the business, and pay off the debt of gratitude he felt he owed to the elder Chester, and he suffered a good deal in the hot seasons. Anxiety and ill-health made him thin and grey, but it did not alter his inner nature a whit.

He was beloved by everyone—man, woman, and child, gentle or simple—with whom he had to do. Amongst his friends those of the d——d good-natured kind were not wanting. One of these died, and, having nothing else in the world to leave behind him, bequeathed his daughter to George—a child of fifteen. That was in the second year of his residence on the island.

Matters, however, took a different course in England.

For six months Miss Jerrold was a martyr to romanticism. She wrote poems, languishing and lachrymose; she kept a diary; she ate with reluctance; she refused to smile, or to dance, or to go to any theatre except the Lyceum, and as for flirtation, she hated the sight of man, and dwelt altogether in spirit with her god—George Arbuthnot. Then someone told her she was getting stout. That filled her with alarm. She was sure it was for want of exercise, and so, for George's sake, she went to a ball. For his sake also she went shortly after to a picnic, and then to a small and early on her own account. Then she accepted an invitation from Lady Blatherwick, and went to Blatherwick Manor for the shooting season, and met some awfully nice people. And one evening she was so indiscreet as to go for a moonlight row with Captain Rattletrap, and the next morning remembered that she hadn't answered that last letter from poor George. Everyone called him "poor George" now. She wished they wouldn't. It made her look eccentric. Time flew more quickly and more pleasantly. But one thing caused her anxiety—she was beyond a doubt getting stout—dreadfully stout. What she should be like at twenty-eight she did not care to imagine. She began to think she had made a great mistake in promising to wait for George. Perhaps he wouldn't have her if she was not the slim sentimental girl he had loved. And certainly she was not sentimental now. She was getting more reasonable every day—and fatter.



If anyone had asked her to marry she would have flung George over, and given him admirable reasons for doing so. But nobody did ask her, and for this reason : Stanley Chester watched over her and George Arbuthnot like their guardian angel.



He let everyone know what a loyal, true-hearted fellow Arbuthnot was, and how Miss Jerrold had pledged herself to him, and how he had gone away to brave "Yellow Jack" for her sake. No decent fellow, knowing that, could make her an offer, and, indeed, so sedulously did Chester work in his friend's behalf, no decent fellow after a time would flirt with her. It would have been a deuced unhand-some thing to cut out such a true and good man as Arbuthnot, and in his absence.

George Arbuthnot returned when his six years expired—he returned to the day with his customary precision. He looked a little older and a little more anxious—graver and greyer than usual—on the morning, when in answer to his telegram Stanley Chester called upon him.

"Made your money, and come home to marry—eh, George?" said Chester.

"Yes," replied Arbuthnot gravely, and then he sighed.

"You have seen Miss Jerrold?"

"I met her last night—by accident."

Arbuthnot looked yet a shade graver.

"Well——"

"She was very, very friendly. Of course I was a little constrained. Friends were with her. People I don't know. But she was very polite."

"D——it! She couldn't be much less to a man she's about to marry."

"No. She's altered a great deal, Chester, I find."

"Why, that's natural. You're not exactly the same, you know. You don't want to get out of the noose, do you?"

"Get out of it? Not marry her? Good heavens, how could I ever think of that after giving my promise?"

"You don't look very happy with the prospect, anyhow."

"The fact is, I'm troubled this morning, Chester. You saw Edith—the girl who left the room as you entered?"

"Yes, and an uncommonly pretty little girl she is, too."

"The sweetest and best in the world. She's a kind of foster-child of mine—that is—well, her father died, and left her under my protection. Not a penny in the world, not a soul to care for her."

"Very good of her father to leave her to you then. Well, George?"

"Well, this morning, when I was telling her about Miss Drummond, and my forthcoming marriage, and so on, the child burst into tears. Then, you know, I found out for the first time that she loved me—loved me as something more than an old friend. I assure you I never felt so guilty in my life. Yet you may be sure I have done nothing to make her love me. And now I'm in the greatest perplexity and grief. For, of course, knowing how she feels towards me, I can't keep her under my roof when I'm married to Miss Jerrold, and I believe it will break the poor girl's heart to send her away—and—and mine too." With this Arbuthnot broke down.



"If that's the case, you had better let me see what I can do for you. What time are you to see Miss Jerrold?"

"This afternoon at three."

"Good. I will have lunch with you at one."

* * * * *

"Well, Arbuthnot. I have been meddling with your affairs; if I have done wrong you must give me credit for wishing to do right."

"What have you done, Chester?"

"Why, I have laid all the facts of the case before Miss Jerrold. She's a wonderfully clear-headed, sensible woman, you know. No nonsense or romance about her."

"Yes, yes. I saw she had changed greatly."

"After laughing a little at the dilemma you were in, she said, in her fat, good-humoured way: 'If it will break

George Arbuthnot's heart to part from the young lady and hers to part from him, the best thing they can do is to marry each other and part no more."

"She said that? Good heavens, I wronged her! I did not think she had such goodness in her heart when I looked at her last night. But she, Chester? I can't give her up after she has waited so long for me."

"That's what I told her."

"It would never do. I couldn't marry Edith and leave the other a spinster."

"I told her that, too. I said, 'George Arbuthnot will will never marry anyone while you are single.' 'What am I to do?' she asked, laughing."

"What did you say to that?"

"Why, I said, 'The only way out of the difficulty that I can see is for you to marry me.'"

"Ah! And she——"

"Well, after a little hesitation—quite natural in the circumstances—she said she would."

"And you'll have her? Oh, Chester! you best of friends!"



ARCADES AMBO.

THEY married for love—Benedict and Lesbia.

In the blissful morning of their honeymoon they concocted a scheme for the eternal continuation of their present happiness. They determined to retire from the world with its commonplace vulgarities, its noise, its temptations, and its wickedness, and live by themselves, and for themselves alone, in an old, old house near the rustic church in which they were wedded, in the midst of a natural park untouched by the hand of man, and twenty miles from a railway station. Here, amidst the innocent and pure delights of nature, they could live content for ever, and know no pain—being always together and having no friends to interrupt the harmonious flow of their blended lives.

This pretty scheme they carried out before the wane of the honeymoon.

Mr. Benedict, adopting a notion of Mr. Leigh Hunt's, made for himself a coat of arms—two doves billing on a field azure, with the motto "Semper Eadem."

When they had led an Arcadian existence for three weeks, and the honeymoon had sunk below the horizon, they began to yawn.

A matter of important business—something to do with shares, which women cannot understand—compelled Benedict to go to London and leave his wife at home one day.



The same affair called him away again a month later ; then a fortnight elapsed, and he was called away again ; and the week following the same necessity of going to London occurred. After that these tiresome affairs took him day after day—except when he had the misfortune to miss the last train, and stayed in town for two days together.

At first Lesbia was distressed for his sake, fearing the ill effect of so much anxiety upon her husband's mind ; then she

was distressed on her own account; then they had "a few words;" then she was downright angry; after that she became indifferent—or at least, she pretended to be.

Having nothing to do, she gorged herself with fiction and grew heartily sick of it. She sat in the library by the open window all day, with heaps of novels about her.

"I suppose I shall live three score and ten years," thought she one day, throwing aside the book she had been looking at, without reading it, for the past half hour, "with no dancing, no talking, no quarrelling, no excitement, nothing to wear out my tissues, I might go on living with patriarchal persistency." And then, subtracting twenty-one (her present age) from seventy, she found she had forty-nine years to live on in her present vegetating style. She tried to reckon how many novels she should get through in that time at the rate of three a day, but the calculation was too complicated, and she was just closing her pretty eyes in drowsy forgetfulness of her cheerlessness when a tennis ball came through the open window and fell plump in her lap.



Astonished, she opened her dark eyes and took up the ball. A letter was attached to it. This she opened and read with the most pleasurable emotion she had felt since the honeymoon was at the full.

"Adored angel," the letter began—and Lesbia blushed to the roots of her hair as she read—"for months I have worshipped you at a distance—chiefly in church on Sundays. The tortures of unrequited love I can endure no longer. Either I must see you to-day or blow out my distracted brains. Say when and where I can meet you, or expect to read in Sunday's newspapers of your admirer's suicide. If your tender heart prompts you to save me from an untimely end, tie your response to this letter to the tennis ball sent herewith and cast it into the shubbery."

Lesbia read this letter through twice, and then, partly from a curious desire to see what sort of a young man was so desperately in love with her, partly from a womanly dread of

causing death, and partly from a spirit of mischief born of idleness and strengthened by her husband's neglect, she wrote this reply:—

“Young Man,—I shall be at the corner of the lane this evening at half-past eight.—SHE WHOM YOU ADORE.”

This letter she tied with trembling fingers to the tennis ball, and threw them together from the open window into the midst of the laurels.

* * * * *

Benedict, on returning to his senses after being thrown from his horse and stunned, thought his last moment was at hand. He lay still and looked up at the blue sky, which he expected to see but for a few moments longer. He felt sure his spine was broken; and he took it to be a punishment of Heaven for his past misdeeds which was not to be revoked. “I deserve it, I deserve it,” he groaned. “Heaven blessed me with an ample fortune, a loving and lovable wife, and an admirable constitution; and I have proved my ingratitude by neglecting my Lesbia and running after a posturante who will have nothing to say to me. Had I been content to rest at home beside my Lesbia, instead of galloping off to catch the next up-train with a view to seeing Totty at the Frivolity *matinée*, I shouldn't have been pitched by that d—d mare. Heaven forgive me for swearing. Here I must lie and die like a dog, with not a soul to close my eyes, and unable to implore the forgiveness of my injured wife. Oh, Lesbia, Lesbia! had I my days to live again, would Heaven but deign to look over my faults, how differently would I behave myself in the future.”

At this moment, hearing a twig break not far away, he turned his eyes and perceived a young gentleman with a radiant face pushing his way through the adjacent thicket.

“Hi!” gasped Benedict.

The radiant young gentleman thus called, glanced at the fallen Benedict, and his radiance departed from his face. For this was the lover of Lesbia; he had her letter of assignation in his bosom, and he felt extremely uncomfortable to find himself in the presence of the lady's husband, there in that husband's park. He hesitated between falling on his

knees to demand pardon, and taking to his heels to evade punishment.

"Lift my head, I am dying," groaned Benedict.

This altered the case; and the young gentleman very readily complied with Benedict's request.

"Not too high. My back's broken. I feel something sticking out."

"I am a surgeon. Let me examine you. What's this, sir,—ah, I see you have a whisky flask in your tail pocket and that has got under your loins."

"Is that all?"

"Nothing more. Your bones are all right."

"The Lord be praised. I've been lying here best part of an hour afraid to move. Do you think I can stand on my legs."

"Try. There. Now how are you?"

"I feel a little stiff."

"Then I see no reason why you should not pursue your way."

"No, sir. As I lay there with death before my eyes I resolved henceforth to stay at home if Heaven permitted me to live. I will return to my house."

"H'm!" thought the young gentleman. "How will my adored angel keep her appointment if her husband stays at home; and what chance have I of success in my amour if he plays a tender part?"

"I will trouble you to lend me your arm. I still feel a little shaky. It certainly must have been heaven who sent you to my assistance. By-the-way, sir, may I ask how you came just at that moment to be passing through my grounds?"



The young gentleman stammered and stuttered without uttering an intelligible word.

"You can tell me," said Benedict, "where you come from, surely?"

To remove suspicion as far as possible the young gentleman said he had come from London that very morning on important business.

"From London — this morning — important business — here!" exclaimed Benedict. "Then you came to find me, eh?"

"Ye—ye—ye—yes, sir."

Benedict looked at him in perplexity for a moment, not knowing the reason of his hesitation and confusion; suddenly a light seemed to break upon his mind, and he said in an undertone, "Ha, I see how it is. I understand your delicacy. You come from Totty."

Not knowing what else to say, the young gentleman said yes, he did come from Totty.

"You have brought a message—an appointment, perhaps, from her, and, hearing me express sentiments of domestic fidelity, you naturally feel reticent in executing your commission."

"That is the case precisely."

"Let me have the letter," said Benedict, "I feel better."

The young gentleman, after a few moments' reflection, recollected the letter he had lately received from Lesbia, and after a little hesitation he produced the paper from his bosom and handed it to Benedict.

"Darling Totty," murmured Benedict. "She writes a capital hand for a ballet-girl—fifty times better than my wife's scrawl. Half-past eight to-night, at the corner of the Lane, that is Drury Lane of course. By George, I feel as right as ever I did. What's the time? Ha! Just time to change this torn coat, and have a wash before catching the 12.40—Halloa! where's my young friend? gone, as I live, and without a word. A most peculiar sort of messenger to be sure."

* * * * *

"Thrown by the mare, my dear," said Benedict cheerfully, when his wife came into his room and found him there. "Don't know what became of her. Stunned for a moment;

rather a nasty fall it would have been for some men, but, used to the pigskin as I am, don't mind trifles of that kind. Right as a trivet. Tell Thomas to have the brougham brought round at once. It's a mercy I shall be able to catch that 12.40 or what would have become of my consolidated



Egyptians, the Lord Harry only knows. Yes, my love, I'll wear my evening coat, and the light one over. These Stock Exchange men are so particular about dress. How kind and good you are, dear; what a blessing it is to have a thoughtful wife."

"He hasn't been so amiable for a month," thought Lesbia, and then she began to regret that she answered the letter of her unknown admirer.

"How sweetly pretty she looks," thought Benedict. "It's a shame to deceive her. However, a man must have a fling before settling down. This is my first and it shall be my last."

"It is a strange thing," thought Lesbia, as she took up her husband's soiled coat and shook it, "that just as I begin to like my husband again, I feel a little jealous of him."

"It is a risky thing," thought Benedict, "to leave a pretty young wife like this, so much alone. Suppose I lost her, or she found me out."

"If he knew what I have done this morning," thought Lesbia. "Or if he were as unfaithful to me as I have been to him, should I ever forgive myself or him."

At this moment, as she was giving Benedict's coat a final shake, a piece of paper fell out of the pocket upon the floor at her feet. She picked it up, opened it, saw her own writing with the appointment, and with a shriek of horror fell back into a chair.

Benedict, turning round at that scream, saw his wife fainting in a chair, with that letter of appointment in her hands which he believed had been sent him by Totty. With a cry of anguish he sank into a chair.

"All is over," thought each.

They sat silent for many minutes, neither daring to look up or to speak a word. At length the man spoke.

"To err is human, to forgive—divine!" he murmured.

Lesbia sobbed.

"The quality of mercy is not strained," continued Benedict. "It falleth as the gentle rain from heaven—blessing him that gives and him that takes."

"How true!" sighed Lesbia.

"A noble soul is superior to resentment. Only the base are unforgiving."



"Heaven forbid that we should cherish resentment."

"Lesbia"—very tenderly.

"Benedict"—in melting tones.

"Shall we agree to make this unhappy incident a lesson for the future?"

"Willingly."

"And make great virtues spring from a little fault?"

"With all my heart."

"Shall we burn that abhorred letter, and mutually agree never more to make the slightest allusion to it?"

"Certainly. It is only in that way that we can forget that it existed. There, I have thrown it upon the fire."

"Oh, noble, sweet, beautiful Lesbia!"

"My Benedict!"

They then embraced with mutual satisfaction, and the following day started for a tour through the Rhineland to recommence their honeymoon.

A DEAR OLD GOOSE.

It was a good thing to know Jack Furnival. If you wanted five pounds he'd let you have it; if you got into a scrape he'd do his utmost to get you out of it; if you were down on your luck and turned into his chambers, he'd set himself to find out the cause of your depression, and contrive to lighten your heart before bidding you good night. There are men whom you can never address by their Christian name; it was just as impossible to call him Mr. Furnival after a few days' acquaintance. People who didn't know him set him down for a fool; those who did know him maintained that he was simply the most generous, lovable



old bachelor living.

Of course he was victimised over and over again. What good-natured man can escape being imposed upon? He would have enjoyed an independency and been a rich man with a little selfishness in his disposition; having none, he had to work hard to pay the taxes levied on his generosity. A good half-dozen worthless old women kept themselves alive on gin through his misdirected philanthropy, and the children who called him godfather, and came down upon him at all seasons for material support, were legion.

One morning he received a letter from Canada. It ran thus:—

“DEAR JACK,—I am about to pay the great debt of nature. Unhappily, it is the only one which will not remain unpaid. You lent me £80 long ago. I have never forgotten your kindness to me—a comparative stranger. The only testimony of affectionate remembrance I can give is to appoint you sole guardian to my child, who will come on to you as soon as I am under the sod. Adieu for ever, dear Jack.—Your unfortunate friend,

“ROBERT HALLECK.”

This letter did not surprise Jack Furnival; he was so accustomed to finding himself executor to men who could rely on no one else to put their affairs in order and settle up their arrears. But it did embarrass him when, some three weeks

later, a tall young woman of eighteen or thereabouts walked into his chambers and announced herself as the child of Robert Halleck, and his ward.

What was he to do with his ward? That question perplexed Jack Furnival exceedingly while the young lady was eating the biscuit and sipping the sherry which he had instinctively put before her. She was too old to send to school, and she was not old enough to put in an almshouse. As he guardian it was his first duty to see that she didn't get into trouble, and how could he rest secure if he sent such a bright, fresh, innocent, attractive young creature as she out of his sight. Certainly he was old enough to be her father—supposing he had married young—and the hair was getting thin on the top of his head, and, so far as his own feelings went, she might stay in his chambers and occupy the spare room with the utmost safety; but then he knew what people would say, and he foresaw that there might be unpleasant complications when Miss Halleck fell in love with some young fellow, who would, of course, want ten thousand impertinent questions answered.

He solved the difficulty at length in this way: There was a flat above his own to let; he took the rooms, had them furnished, and installed Miss Halleck in them, with an old woman, recommended by half-a-dozen respectable parsons, to wait upon her and be her companion.

But it was as impossible to keep Miss Halleck in her room as to retain a bird in a cage when the door is left open.

When Jack came out of his dressing-room in the morning he found her in his sitting room, and he couldn't get her out of it until it was absolutely necessary to go to bed. But for all that she was not troublesome. When he had work to do she became so still and silent that he wouldn't have known she was in the

room but for a glimpse of her bright head over the back of a big chair, where she sat reading a book selected at his recommendation, and she never stirred till he signified that



the work was done. Then it was as if a pack of children had suddenly been set free from school. She filled the place with life and sound ; she was all over the room at once with laughter, snatches of song, and scraps of nonsense, all so fresh and delightful to Jack's somewhat *blasé* senses, that it seemed to carry him into a new world of which he had had no conception. He found time to take her out and about a good deal—at first for her own sake, fearing his quiet mode of living would weary her, and then for his own, finding his greatest happiness arose from watching her delight in the new experiences of London life.

The old woman upstairs did not murmur. She was pious and sleepy, and loved nothing better than to doze into forgetfulness over a volume of Blair's sermons, which she certainly would not have been able to do had Miss Halleck been in her rooms.

Gradually the girl altered. She became less careless and boisterous. She ceased to tease Furnival, and was still and mouselike when there was no necessity—so far as his work was concerned. Then she ceased to come down to his rooms unasked. He tried to treat that as a joke, and sent an ironically formal letter asking to have the pleasure of her company to tea. She took the note in all seriousness, and



came sharp to the time he had appointed, looking pale and a little frightened, as though she expected to be charged with some fault, and it needed a rather embarrassing explanation to make her understand that the formality was a joke.

All this troubled Jack not a little, and he tried to get at the reason of her altered manners and ways. Had she received bad news from Canada? No. Was she getting home-sick? No. Did she sigh to see her old friends again? No ; she had no old friends, and London was the dearest place in all the world to her.

Failing to get any satisfactory explanation, Furnival tried the old woman when Miss Halleck had gone out for a walk

—latterly she had fallen into the habit of walking out alone without hinting at the object of her walk.

Shaking the old woman out of her slumbers, he asked her straightly what was the matter with her young lady.

"Lor, sir, don't you take any notice of that," said the duenna, with a cunning look in her puckered eyes. "'Tain't nothing but what she'll grow out of. Every young gal's like that when she first falls in love."

Furnival saw it all clearly enough now. Her silence—her solitude-seeking—her unexplained promenades—all were clearly enough accounted for by the fact that the girl had found some young fellow to love. It was all natural enough; but, somehow, Furnival was not satisfied. Yet he saw how inevitable the thing was. "Can't expect her to keep always a child for my amusement," thought he.

"Kitty," said he one day, "I've found out your secret."

"What secret?" she gasped, sinking into a chair, trembling, and white.

"Don't be frightened, my child," he said, drawing his chair to her side; "we have been brought into the relation of father and daughter, and all the tenderness a daughter commands from her father I hope you will find in me."

"Yes, yes, yes."

"The secret I've found out is not a very dreadful one. You are in love."

She covered her scarlet cheeks with her hands, and presently mustering up her courage, she said:

"Yes, I am in love."

"Well, if the young fellow is worthy of your love, I cannot object to that. The only possible harm would be in your loving someone who was undeserving."

"Oh, he is the best—best—'young fellow' in the world."

"That is just the one thing which is open to question. Your judgment can scarcely be trusted in such a matter, and so I must beg you to let me act for you. Believe me, I shall be indulgent. Come, tell me his name."



"I can't."

"What! he has told you that he loves you, and not let you know his name?"

"He hasn't told me that he loves me."

"Good heavens, Kitty! then you don't know if this fellow loves you at all?"

"Oh, I'm nearly certain he loves me."

"But does he know that you love him?"

"I don't think he does. There's the difficulty, you see. If I could only let him know that I love him, I think it would be all right."

Furnival was silent before this marvel of ingenious simplicity.

"Well, what do you propose to do, Kitty?" he asked, after a pause.

"I don't know, quite. You see, I should die of shame if I made any advance and he misconstrued it, or did not respond as I should like him to do."

"Oh, I understand your delicacy, my dear child."

"And so I have rather avoided giving him any testimony of my affection than make it known to him. But we can't go on like that for ever, can we?"

"Not if you want to get married," said Furnival with a laugh.

"And so I thought that perhaps the best thing I could do would be to write to him—only I don't quite know how to begin. Can you help me?"

"I'll try, though it's a precious difficult job for an old bachelor to tackle. However, we'll make the attempt. Here's a scrap of paper." (He took an old envelope from his pocket, tore it open, and spread it on his card-case.) Now, how shall we begin?—better say 'Sir'—there's no knowing what he is—maybe the biggest blackguard under the sun."

"I don't think he is," said Miss Halleck, in parenthesis.

"Ten to one he is, though!" said Furnival, under his breath, and perhaps at that moment the wish was father to the thought. "Well, there we are—'Sir'—now, what's to come next?"

Miss Halleck hid her face in her hands again, was silent a minute, and then murmured, tremblingly, "I love you."

"Oh, hang it all, I can't write that," said Furnival.

"Why not? it's the truth. And what else can I say?"

That was a poser.

"Well," said Furnival at length, "if it must be—— Let me see, what did you say?"

"I love you."

"'I love you,' there it is. What next?"

"Why, that's all."

"That's all?"

"What else is there to say? If he don't love me when he reads that——" Miss Helleck finished the sentence with a sigh.

"Rummiest letter I've ever written," thought Furnival.

"But, Kitty," he said, "what's the use of this letter now it's written? We don't know the fellow's name."

Miss Helleck snatched the paper out of his hand, threw it into the hearth, and made for the door. Amazed at this outburst of temper, Furnival ran after her and caught her.

"I beg you won't be angry with me," he implored. "You don't know how deeply I feel in this affair, dear. You said you couldn't tell me his name——"

She hesitated a moment, and then in desperation cried,

"I can't tell you his name; but isn't it written on the back of the letter you have been making such a muddle over, you dear old goose?"

Furnival glanced at the scrap of paper in the hearth. The envelope had turned over, and he saw his own name and address.

Then he went down on his knees, and made himself more than ever a "dear old goose."



CITIZENS OF PRAGUE.

THEY were three jolly fellows as ever lived—Bob Pipkin, Charlie Rock, and little Widdle—artists who yet had to work for their bread. Had they only had to work for their bread they might have been lazier than they were, for fari-



naceous food was not the largest item of their expenses, but beer and tobacco were expensive necessities of their life, and there is a stage in the existence of old coats, beyond which they will not go. They shared a studio to lessen the expenses and to enjoy the pleasure of mutual encouragement.

It occurred to these companions on the Fifth of November that they ought to enjoy themselves. Why that day more than another should be selected for an orgie it is difficult to say; they certainly had a better excuse for idleness than usual in the fact that Fitzroy Street was filled with fog and it was impossible to paint.

"Where shall we go?" asked Bob Pipkin.

"We can get into the Tolliety without paying."

"I don't know—there's the programme."

"One amongst three of us won't cost much; and there's that sixpence of Charlie's that they won't take at the public-house."

"We went there on Saturday."

"What does that matter. A foggy night like this they'll be glad to pass us through."

"But I hate sitting at the back of the dress circle."

"Pipkin has got a clean shirt, and if he wore my Ulster to hide his coat and trousers, and changed boots with little Widdle he could go in front to ask for the seats, and I'll be bound they'd give him three stalls, it's sure to be precious thick."

"Can't we get into any other theatre. I'm tired of the Tolliety; we've seen that burlesque twenty-seven times, and when you've heard a joke twenty-seven times you don't want to hear it again."

This was a truth with which all agreed so entirely that silence ensued, and each abandoned the hope of getting any enjoyment from another night at the Tollity.

"It's a long time since we had a dance," sighed Charlie Rock.

"Ah!"

"I heard that Jones intended to give a hop after his youngsters had finished their squibs to-night."

"Which Jones?"

"Jones the amateur who came down to the art class in the beginning of the summer."

"Don't know him," said little Widdle.

"Lives at Hampstead."

"Never heard of him," said Charlie Rock.

"Lives like a fighting cock."

"Do you know him?"

"I was introduced to him."

"Well, I don't see why you should not drop in promiscuously, and take us with you," said little Widdle.

"But we couldn't stop if he said he had visitors."

"Couldn't we!" exclaimed Charlie Rock. "If I once got inside the passage, hints of that kind wouldn't persuade me to leave the house."

"I ask you, as a sensible man, Charlie, could you ask a lady to dance with you in that coat? Why I can see the pattern of your shirt through the elbows, and look at little Widdle's breeches."

"Well, what's the matter with 'em?" asked little Widdle, indignantly, straddling, and looking down on his knees. Pipkin merely shrugged his shoulders.

"I request an explanation, Pipkin. What's the matter with my breeches?" asked the little man in anger.

"It's not your knees, Widdle. You know very well where you always clean your palette knife."



"Don't quarrel, you fellows. I know how we can get over this little difficulty. There's that Jew in Holywell Street supplies greengrocers with evening dress when they go out to wait at table. I'll be bound we can get patent boots, gibuses, and everything there."

"But what does he charge?"

"I don't know. But what does that matter? We shall return the things to him. Besides, he deals in pictures. I'm not certain we may not make our fortunes out of this idea. If he wants payment he'll be compelled to accept our work, and by that means we shall get the introduction to society at large, for which we have so long waited in vain."

"It's a splendid notion. You go there and get the things at once, Charlie. And, by-the-way, you might hint that they are costumes for models, eh?"

Charlie Rock returned in triumph with the required apparel. The Jew had gone out to buy some pork sausages, and left his establishment in the hands of a Christian, who had yielded to Charlie's persuasions.

The smallest suit was selected for little Widdle, and they began to dress at once, for though they did not intend to visit Jones, of Hampstead, until ten o'clock, they saw no reason why they should not enjoy the novel sensation of having whole suits of clothes on their backs before that time. Moreover, they felt uncertain as to the length of time they might be allowed to wear them. The Jew might doubt their solvency, and reclaim the garments unless payment in advance was made.

"As we've borrowed the things, it would be ridiculous not to wear them. These Jews are such cheats," remarked Charlie Rock.

So they hurried over their toilet.

There was no waistcoat quite long enough for Charlie Rock, and no pair of trousers sufficiently short for little Widdle. However, Pipkin ran into Tottenham Court Road, and purchased a pennyworth of pins, and by pinning down Charlie Rock's waistcoat over the top button of his trousers, and tucking the bottoms of little Widdle's trousers into his boots, so that the fold falling over just escaped his heels when he walked, they managed to make themselves presentable.

"You look a regular swell, Pipkin," said his friend, admiringly.

"Well, you don't look so bad, Charlie; I should walk with my thumbs in my waistcoat pockets if I were you. You can see where it's pinned when you stand upright."

"How do I look?" asked little Widdle, drawing himself to his full height, and looping his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat.

"First-rate; but what have you done, man? You have put your trousers on the wrong side in front."

"No, I haven't, but the things are so cursed baggy."

"I've still a couple of pins.

I'll take a reef in behind for you that'll make them fit like a glove."

When everything was completed Bob Pipkin said,—

"Now we're safe. The Jew can't get the clothes without issuing a writ under the Habeas Corpus Act."

"Still, I don't see why we should stop at home now we are dressed. What do you say to a crawl up Regent Street, boys?" asked little Widdle.

"I'm ready for you," answered Charley Rock, pegging down his waistcoat with his thumbs and hooking up his trousers with his forefingers in a careless manner. "Bob, old man, take your hands out of your waistcoat pockets: it looks suspicious both doing the same."

"But what shall I do with my hands? I can't put them in my trousers pockets because little Widdle has to do that to keep his pins from bursting away."

"You can use my long mahi-stick for a cane, and you shall have a cigar to *finesse* with, to be paid for from our common funds," sniggered Charlie Rock.

"There was a toothpick belonging to some one on the chimney-piece about a week ago," hinted little Widdle.

"That shows how lamentably ignorant of society manners you are, Widdle. Do you think a man uses a toothpick with his fingers? The toothpick wouldn't be out of place with



you or Charlie, who have to keep your hands in your pockets, but I must have something to flourish about."

At this moment they were all startled by a loud knock at the street door, and Charlie Rock having put his head out of the window withdrew it quickly, whispering in a tone of terror: "It's a Jew."



They all rushed to the staircase and looked down the well into the hall below, where the house-keeper was in conference with the visitor.

"Mr. Rock," she called, "here's Mr. Abrims coming up to see you."

And slowly but surely "Mr. Abrims" ascended.

"Abrahams, that's the name," muttered Charlie. "Now what's to be done?"

"I have it; give me your ulster, Pipkin," said little Widdle.

In half a minute the little man had concealed himself in the ulster, and then as he took the key from the door and put one foot outside the door, he said: "You boys stay here till you're wanted, and don't breathe."

He got on the landing, and was just locking the door as the fat Jew came up and began to look about.

"Menjouth lot of thtairth, po' my thoul," he gasped, putting his hands on the balusters to block the way, and looking at little Widdle with a critical eye.

"Five flights, and sixteen in each," responded Widdle, putting the key in his pocket.

"Five, my dear thir? I thought I come up thix," Mr. Abrahams responded, opening his eyes in astonishment.

"That's the sixth," said little Widdle, unblushingly pointing to the flight which led to the garret.

"Oh, then, prapth you're not Mистер Rock."

"No, my name is Widdle; if you are a dealer——"

"My dear," said Mr. Abrahams, checking him with a gesture, "I don't want to buy no picters to-day. I'm after thome valuable clothe that my fool of a manth gone and lent without a depothit, and I'll jutht go up and find that Mithter

Rock at onth. I thought you couldn't be him, becauth my atthithtant (thtupid ath!) thaid he wath a big man, and you're only a little one. Bethides, those narrow thairs lookth more like the plathe where that Mr. Rock would be likely to live. I'll jutht go and thee thtraight away."

As he disappeared up the narrow flight little Widdle unlocked the door and whispered,—

"Come out, boys—sharp's the word. The Jew's gone up to the servants' bedroom, and we will just mention that fact to the housekeeper as we go out."



* * * * *

After exhausting the pleasures of Regent Street on that foggy Fifth of November, the three friends—Bob Pipkin, Charlie Rock, and little Widdle—dropped into a secluded bar at the back of the Haymarket to wash the unpleasant taste from their mouths and settle their course of action.

"We can't go to Hampstead until ten, or we shall have to let off fireworks for the amusement of the children, and if we burn our clothes the Jew will make us pay for them," said Charlie Rock.

"I'm tired of walking up and down Regent Street," said Widdle.

"It's certain we dare not return to the studio. Those Jews have a way of waiting patiently until their creditors return, which is only equalled by a cat watching for a mouse," said Bob Pipkin.

"We have had nothing to eat since twelve o'clock."

"Why shouldn't we have a regular good dinner for once?"

"A good proposal; but how's it to be paid for?"

"Let us put our funds together. How much have you got, Bob?"

"Half-a-sovereign," said Bob, counting it out.

"Put it in my hat. Now, Charlie, out with your money."

"Here's tenpence, and the guinea we owe for three weeks' rent. I forgot to pay it this morning."



"So much the better; put it all in."

"Well, and what have you, Widdle?"

"Here is my total."

"Two and elevenpence halfpenny," said Pipkin, counting it into the hat.

"That's a good joke for you, Widdle; putting two and elevenpence halfpenny into the hat and taking out eleven shillings," growled Charlie Rock.

"The best man can't give more than he has," retorted Little Widdle; "I am rather short just now, for I gave half-a-sovereign away in charity last night."

"I wish you had reserved your charity for a later occasion."

"You wouldn't like to leave me out for a few shillings; you know how cheerful I always am at dinner."

"We can't eat cheerfulness," muttered Charlie Rock.

"I hate sensual indulgence. I would rather have a crust of bread and cheese with a lively companion than a whole pork pie by myself."

"Feel in your other pockets, Widdle."

"What's the use. Haven't I had my hands in my pockets all the time we've been out to keep the pins from tearing the plait behind? I know every stitch in 'em."

"Try your waistcoat."

"Nonsense; I put all my cash in my trousers pocket, where I could take care of it, and you don't think the Jew would be such a fool as to lend us clothes with—Halloa, what's this?"

"What have you found?"

"Eighteenpence, by all that's holy! In it goes to swell the fund. You see I'm generous enough when I have money—eighteenpence."

"The suit must have belonged to a millionaire," said Pipkin.

"You can't find any more, can you?" asked Rock.

"I feel something—card or paper," said Little Widdle, fumbling in his pocket with trembling fingers.

"A five-pound note, I'll be bound."

"It's a carte-de-visite—with a name on the back," said Pipkin.

"Death and fury."

"Hush," said Rock, interrupting his friend.

Little Widdle regarded the carte-de-visite and clutched at the hair of his head.

"What's the matter," asked Pipkin.

"The matter! Why the portrait is that of the faithless girl to whom I plighted my troth last night, and she vowed she had never spoken to a man before!"

"Never mind, Widdle, you shall forget her."

"But to think of her ingratitude. It was only last week I bought her a pork-pie!"

"Bear up. We will have three of whisky each out of the general fund, in order to forget your grief."

"A pint of cooper will go further?" replied Widdle.

"We will have that after," suggested his comforter.

So they drank, and found comfortable forgetfulness of the perfidy of woman; and then, by common consent, they adjourned to the Criterion, and dined like lords for six shillings a head. After that, as there was yet an hour to spare, they adjourned to the smoking-room, and sat there for two hours. And they drank until the waiter politely, but firmly, declined to provide them with intoxicating liquors to any further extent. In mute indignation they left the establishment, and determined to walk to Hampstead, as their diminished funds were not sufficient to pay for such an extravagance as a cab.

"I feel particularly funny," said Pipkin, as they came into the fresh air.

"I see double—everything in twos," said Rock, staring hard at a lamp-post. "Indeed, I'm not prepared to affirm that I don't see triple—everything in threes."

"You have the advantage of me, dear boys," said little Widdle, who walked in between his two friends, "for I can't see at all—nothing."



"I'll tell you what," said Pipkin, suddenly stopping, "the life we're leading is perfec'ly disgustin'. It's vile. It's humiliatin'—its beas'ly."

"You're quite right," hiccoughed little Widdle. "I—I intend to marry down—that is, settle down. I shall get married first thing to-morrow morning."

"Who—who—whom 'll you marry?" asked Rock, whose grammar was like his liquors—rather mixed.

"Fanny—Fanny, hee-uck! Don't know her other name," answered Widdle.

"Who—who-whoms, hitchuk, Fanny?" asked Pipkin.



"Tha-tha-thatchick! Fanny!" replied Widdle, holding out the carte.

"But Fatchuck has been deceiver—deceiting you!"

"No!" Widdle answered with impressive solemnity; "it was I who led Fanchuck! from the innocent paths of hea-uck! Toddemy Court Road."

"What is that to me?" sobbed Rock, trying to get the lining of his tail pocket up to his eyes, under the impression that it was a neck handkerchief. "I—I am a villuck—villain!"

"Have you—you also led Fan—Fan—Fanhichuck! from the inn'cent paths of Toddemy Court Road?" asked Widdle.

"No; but I borrowed three suits of clothes from Mist-click! Abrahams, and we've spent the eighteenpence he left in 's guileless simplicity of 's Hebrew nature in the waistcoat pocket of same."

"No, Charlie; 'twasn't the Rabrichock!-brams. It was the millionaire."

"And he, perhaps, has been ruined by it. His in'cent children are crying to him f'brick!—f'bread, and he is forced to refuse. Where's Springtin Ousquare?"

"What d'ye want with Springting Hou-hou-square?"

"I will advertise fact that I have found gemman's eighteenpence, and perhaps I shall be bountifully rewarded."

"I'm a bad lot," said Bob Pipkin.

"What have you done, old man?"

"I've helped to spend the—three weeks' rent, and how can

I ever hope to refund the—hick—money we have spent in sinful, wanton, wicked waste.

"You are not such a drunken vagabond as I am," said Charlie Rock, with a sob.

"The two of you don't equal me in villi-chuck !-any !" With these words little Widdle tore himself away, and hanging his hand on the arm of a policeman said—

"Mr. Policeman, be good enough to arrest me. I have led a virtuous young hillock from virtuous paths of Toggelmy Court Road."

"Take me, if you please, before a Lord Mayor," said Charlie Rock ; "I have ruined the father of a family, and brought his in'cent wife and children to destruction. I have robbed a millionaire of his little all."

"What have you taken?" asked the officer.

"Eighteenpence. Eighteenpence which he left in the pocket of my friend's waistcoat."

"Here, you move on," said the policeman in a peremptory manner.

"P'liceman, I request you to put the hand-chick ! cuffs on me. I owe three weeks' rent," said Bob Pipkin.

"Who do you think you are getting at?" demanded the officer, moving away.

"This is what justice is coming to in old England," sobbed little Widdle ; "the police refuse to arrest the hardened miscreanhicks of society. Let us go to Hampstead."

"No ; I cannot mix in giddy throng—I refuse giddy throng. My soul is filled with remorse," said Charlie Rock.

"And so is mine," said Pipkin ; "let us go home to bed."

Little Widdle, clasping a lamp-post, exclaimed, "Oh, Fanny ! Sweet and in'cent young female ! I will atone for the past."

"I will not leave a stone unturned until I have paid our good landlady," sighed Pipkin.



"I will work, dear boys, my talent and gen——heivuck! genius shall be recognised. When I grow rich I will borrow suit of clothes every day, and return them always with eighteenpence in the pocket, in the hope that one day that unhappy father of a family may recover what he has lost——hippob!" said Rock in conclusion.

They mingled their sighs and tears as they wandered round Lambeth in search of Fitzroy Square, and when, at length, they found themselves in their studio and heard the church clock strike six, they sorrowfully asked each other why they had arrayed themselves in guilty splendour.



A DANGEROUS FLIRTATION.

(*A Reminiscence of the Oaks.*)

BROWN couldn't go with me. At the last moment I received a telegram telling me that his wife was "indisposed." I knew what that meant. Mrs. B. had exhibited the ordinary hysteric symptoms by which she overcame his lingering desires for bachelor enjoyment. It was too bad. The hansom was engaged, and the hamper from Fortnum and Mason waiting in my chambers. I detest solitary pleasure, yet whom at that late moment could I ask to accompany me? The only man I could think of as likely to be disengaged was Robinson, of Clapham. His house lies a little off the route, but I had ordered cabby to be at the door early, and I determined to try for Robinson—albeit he is a little dull.



The stream of vehicles was thin, for it was early, but the children and servant-maids were already on the look-out at the windows and garden gates. On the west of Clapham Common we turned off from the main road, and entered that in which Robinson lives. The houses are old, square, heavy and respectable, with large gardens and high walls. Being out of the line of traffic, there were but few people about; only a glimpse of the hastening throng in the main thoroughfare could be seen, only the faint sound of a horn passing the end of the road could be heard—just sufficient to tell the inmates of those dead houses that there was life and gaiety near.

"Do the people who live in this sombre road ever have thought of the brighter living world beyond their walls?" I asked myself, looking from one side of the way to the other.

Just at that moment, and as if in reply to my mental question, I caught sight of a young girl perched upon the top of a high wall, and looking at me with wide open eyes. She

was a young girl, not more than eighteen or nineteen years old, a blonde with marvellous blue eyes. She was dressed in black to the throat, which served to increase the brilliancy of her complexion and the whiteness of her hands. Her tight-sleeved, close-fitting dress gave the unbroken lines of her full, round arms, and well-developed, yet graceful, figure. She sat sideways upon the wall, with one white hand resting on the flat coping stone behind her. She must have had a good long pair of steps to have got up there. As I drew near, I saw her give a quick, furtive glance behind her, as if she feared being discovered; then she looked at me again with her bewildering eyes.

It was the prettiest picture in the world. A canopy of golden laburnum hung over her head, and a great bush of guelder-roses at her back threw up her figure in relief. There was a mixture of coyness and boldness in the expression of her face, as if she longed for freedom, yet dared not taste it.

As our eyes met, she blushed, and an innocent smile curved her lips, as though she were saying to herself, "What capital fun you must be having out there—you in the free world!" It was a smile of young innocence, rather than of maturer coquetry. I nodded; she made a little movement with her head, and I caught the gleam of her white teeth as the red lips parted. Then the cab rattled past her. I put my head out, and looked back. She was following the cab with her eyes. I waved my hand. She put her fingers to her lips.

The next moment I signalled to the cabman to stop.



* * *

There is no better cabman than mine. He is never surprised at anything, and seems to have no thought beyond that of obeying orders and cutting off corners.

His imperturbable temper saves me much embarrassment at times.

"Stay here," I said, getting out.

"Right sir," said he, with the voice and look of an autom-

aton, and he pulled out his paper to read. An indiscreet cabman would have grinned, a stupid cabman would have asked questions, or turned his horse round. I needed nothing to add to the embarrassment of the moment as I returned to the garden wall on which sat the pretty girl in black. She did not pretend to ignore my return, only she glanced behind her furtively, and as I came near put her finger upon her lips. When I was close underneath, she looked down with the most bewitching smile that ever gave tenderness to a lovely face.

"I think I must have seen you somewhere before," I said, breaking silence with a remark which, though the well-used words were new to her, must have seemed intensely false from the faltering accent in which it was whispered.

"Very likely," she returned, in a whisper; "at church, perhaps."

"Probably," I said. Heaven forgive me! I have not entered a church for twenty years. "Anyway," I continued, "you won't be angry with me for coming back to speak to you?"

She shaped the word "No" with her lips, shaking her head.

"You seem to me like a poor little bird on the edge of its cage, longing, yet fearing to fly away," said I.

She nodded, and the smile left her face. She looked wofully up the road, and said, under her breath,

"What is going on up there, and why has your cab got gauze curtains?"

"Don't you know, you poor little thing? It is the Oaks day of the races at Epsom."

"Races!" she exclaimed, softly clapping her hands. "What fun that must be."

"It is called the ladies' day," I said.

"Ah! you are going to take a lady in the cab with you."

"No," I replied; "unfortunately, I don't know a lady who will go with me."

"Oh, if I could go with you!" she said, clasping her hands, and looking down at me with childish regret in her simple face.



"If I knew your father or mother——" I said.

"I have neither," said she. "I am only a governess to the children here, and they are away to-day, and I am all alone with the servants. I can't talk to them, and I can't read for thinking how happy one must be out there, and it is terrible to be shut up here from Christmas to Midsummer, and have no amusements, even such as the servant-maids get, and——" she buried her face in her hands.

"It is an abominable shame!" I said.

"Never mind," said she, wiping her eyes.

I thought a minute, my heart aching for the girl, and then I said,

"When do you expect the folks home?"

"Not before ten o'clock to-night—twelve miserable hours."

"Couldn't you get out and come with me? We shall be back long before they return."

"Oh, if I could!" she cried, her face flushing with delight. "The servants think I am in my own room. I have locked the door."

"Well, then, come," said I, not thinking what a rash and cruel thing I was doing.

"I have no bonnet," she said, "but I have this black lace."

"That will be more charming than any bonnet."

"But how can I get out? The gate is locked, and the gardener has the key?" She looked about, and then said suddenly, "Wait! I know. Can you see anyone about?"

"Not a soul."

Quickly, and without a word, she pulled up the light garden ladder by which she had ascended, and rapidly passed it down to me. It was two feet short of the top of the wall.

"Can you come up and help me?" she asked, undaunted by the difficulty.

I suppose it was the pleasure of guiding her pretty feet to the steps of the ladder, the excitement of hurrying her into the cab, the delight of having such a lovely little companion in dull Robinson's place, that bewildered me. Certain it is that I never for a moment thought how she was to get back



to the house without discovery, and what the consequences might be of leaving the ladder standing against the wall where she had descended.

My cabman exhibited no sign of curiosity or surprise.

* * * * *

She arranged the black lace about her head, so as greatly to conceal her face from observation, and with a pair of gloves that we bought on the road looked as daintily dressed a little lady as one could see.

She told me her history—the not uncommon one, alas! of a friendless girl made into a kind of domestic slave in the name of charity. But there was little sign of unhappiness in her face, for she was much excited by the scenes of gaiety and life into which she had so unexpectedly entered. Everything seemed new and marvellous to her; her *naïveté* and simplicity were charming. She was astonished at the quantity of good things contained in the small hamper, and, when the champagne was poured out, asked if it was ginger-beer. How her eyes sparkled as she drank it!

After lunch she asked if she could walk about and see things. We left the hansom. I offered to take her into the Grand Stand, but with quick feminine perception she saw that her costume was unsuitable for the company there, and declined, saying she preferred to mix with the moving crowd. She wanted to know who the men with the strange hats and umbrellas were, and what they said. I explained their vocation, and, when she understood the system of betting, she said,

“Do you think he will bet with me? I should like to run the risk of losing.”

“Certainly,” I said.

She drew a little purse from her pocket, and, taking out from it the only coin it contained, she said,

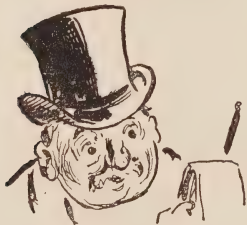
“Will you tell him that I bet sixpence on Spurs, it’s such a nice name for a horse.”

I laughed at her—she did not seem to see why; and, leaving her, I staked a couple of sovereigns on the horse.

“Now let us go back to the cab,” she said, when I returned; “the men push and frighten me a little. Some poor man has had his pocket picked, I think.”

We went back to the cab, and watched the race. After the race I fetched the money that Spurs had won for her. She looked at it in speechless astonishment.

"Beginners are always lucky," I said.



"Are they?" she asked. "Then I had better stake all this on the next race."

I took the money and placed it; she won again, and once more staked. She won every race, and by the time the horse was put in for our return she counted in her lap not less than ninety sovereigns.

* * *

I felt a little shiver run through her arm as it touched mine, when we started to return.

"Are you cold?" I asked.

"No," said she; "I am only thinking now terrible it will be to go back to that cage, as you called it, after so much happiness. Oh, how I shall think of you! Oh, how I shall cry when I remember your kindness to me!"

I could say nothing. Suddenly she said,

"How am I to get in?"

"Good heavens!" I cried. "I never thought of that. How shall we manage it?"

She was silent for some moments, and then she said quietly, shaking her head,

"I don't think I will go back there ever again."

I looked at her aghast. There was a look of quiet determination in her face that was unmistakable.

"But, my child," I said, "you have no other choice."

"I am not a child," she said, "I am a woman; I have broken off my chains, and I will not wear them again."

"But you said you have no friends," said I.

"I have you," she said, looking at me with her large, beautiful eyes. "I do not want more."

"If you are a woman and not a child," I said, "you must



know that it is impossible for you to live in London with——”

I stopped.

“I do not understand you,” said she. “Here I have more money in my pocket than I can spend upon myself. Why shall we not spend it together? You like me, don’t you?”

“Like you, you pretty sweet soul!” I cried, “how can I help loving you?”

“Then why shall we not be friends?”

She looked so innocent and simple that I could not bring myself even to hint at the reasons for avoiding an intimacy such as she suggested.

“You have a house to live in?” she asked, still in a tone of perplexity!

“I have chambers,” I said.

“How many chambers?” she asked.

“There are only three rooms,” said I.

“Why, that is more than enough. I have only been used to one, and three will be as good as one and a-half for each of us.”

“Let me take you back,” I said—“I will explain how I tempted you to run away, and take all the blame.”

“No,” she said, “I am quite determined. If you take me back there I will throw myself out of window. I will close my eyes to-night in freedom or in death.”

“I have done a wicked thing,” I said, half to myself.

“No, no,” she said. “You are the dearest, best friend that an unhappy girl ever found. You shall never repent taking pity on me. I will bless you every day. Come, don’t let us be sad. Let us return to our gay thoughts and pleasant smiles. I am getting quite hungry. We will dine together. Where?”

Forced to defer serious thoughts until after dinner, I said we would dine at the Criterion.

“The Criterion,” said she, “is not that a theatre?”

“Yes; it adjoins the dining-place.”



"Couldn't we go and see it after dinner?" she asked. "I have never been inside a theatre."

"I don't think the play there would be quite intelligible to you."

"Why not?"

"Young people prefer spectacle and music."

"Ah, I read in the *Times* that there was a grand spectacle at a place called the Alhambra."

"How could I lead this poor child out of evil?" I asked myself.

"What makes the cab go down on one side?" she asked, when we were just entering the Borough Road.

"I daresay a friend of the driver's has jumped upon the step by his side," I said.

Then we were both quiet. Seeing me grave—indeed, I never felt so guilty before, faulty as my life had been—she presently slipped her hand under my arm, and pressing it to her glowing side, said,

"Don't be afraid, dear friend, for me, think only of yourself." With her disengaged hand she drew the gauze curtain across, and said, looking into my eyes, "Kiss me, dear!"

What might have happened I know not; but just at that moment the cab pulled up by the curb.

Turning quickly, and looking from the window she gave a cry of alarm. We were opposite the police-station. At the same moment a man in a plain suit jumped off the step by the driver, and coming to the door, said—

"Beg your pardon, sir, but you and the young lady will have to come inside with me."

The girl had turned deadly pale; she slipped her hand, which had been under my arm, quickly into her pocket. The action was seen by the man who had stepped upon the foot-board.

"Halloa, miss, what have you got there?" he asked.

"Nothing but the money I have won at the races," she answered.

"Let me see," he cried, and quick as thought dived his hand beside hers into her pocket. She dropped back into the corner of the cab as though she had been stabbed, while

the plain-clothes officer drew out a gentleman's gold hunting-watch and albert chain.

"At it again, miss, eh?" said he. "Well, before the crowd gets any bigger, I'll trouble you to come into the station."

The sad tale the girl had invented was not half so terrible as the truth. L—— S——, I found, was the daughter of a peer, and from her infancy had manifested a fatal infatuation not alone for theft but for other vices. All efforts to cure this form of insanity had failed, and for the last six months she had been kept under restraint in the private "home" from which I had helped her to escape.



The ladder had excited alarm, her room was found empty, and a servant in the neighbourhood had seen her go off in a cab with green gauze curtains. A detective in connection with the establishment, and who knew L—— S——, had guessed at the truth, and stationed himself where he could look into the vehicles returning from Epsom. To avoid a public commotion he jumped up beside the driver, and explained to that judicious man the position of affairs as they drove toward the police station.

Poor L—— S—— was taken back to her prison; I was let off with a not unmerited rebuke.

THAT JENKINS.

"YOU'RE a lawyer, I believe!" exclaimed the little man, as he entered hastily the private office of Mr. Weasel, solicitor and town clerk of Diddlebury.

"I am a solicitor," answered Mr. Weasel, and then with a bland smile—"be seated, sir. You seem heated."

"Never mind what I seem. I have come to talk about business, not my personal appearance. I'm a betting man—I don't disguise the fact—I'm not ashamed of it; I'm a betting man, and I've been done."

"If your case permits of redress——"

"Do you think I should be such an awful owl as to ask for redress if I couldn't get it! There's a house just outside this God-forsaken town called 'The Rookery,' and there's a man hangs out there that calls himself a gentleman."

"You refer to a man named Jenkins——"

"Jenkins—that's his running name—wears a green shade over one eye, and talks with a lisp—cuss him!"

"That is his description; and you, I have no doubt, are one of the unfortunate number of those who have laid wagers with him upon the race that was run to-day."



"No, I just ain't. Don't you try to be too clever. I ain't bet nothing with him; but I've been fool enough to lend him every cussed stiver I had to make bets with others on the condition that we were to go halves in the plunder—cuss and bust his——"

"Hush, my dear sir!"

"I say he's got every farthing of my money, that Jenkins; five hundred quid and over. May every bone in his body be everlastingly——"

"I must really beg of you to withdraw from my office if you cannot control your language. I perceive your position, and I may be able to give you assistance if you will be calm, and refrain from using intemperate language."

"Well, guv'nor, I'll try to keep my mouth shut. But look here, I'm a square-actin' fellow, though I do get my living by

'osses, and I'll be plain with you before I get any advice. I ain't got any money. That Jinkins has every blessed brown, so you'll have to pay yourself out of the winnings, if you're lucky enough to best Jinkins ; and if those terms won't suit you, I must try another lawyer."

"My dear sir, we will leave the question of payment for another time. I must tell you that very many gentlemen have consulted me respecting money owing to them by this man Jenkins as the results of this day's racing. He refuses to open his door in response to applications. That he has not left our town is certain ; he has been seen quite recently by a gentleman who only left this office five minutes ago. It may be impossible to obtain from him money lost in wagers, since such debts do not come within the action of the law ; but the man has been getting into debt with the tradespeople during the fortnight of his stay here, and with the information you will be able to give we shall doubtless secure a sufficient punishment for the rascal."

"But what's to prevent his bolting and leaving us all in the lurch?"

"Our local constable who knows the man well has been sent to the railway-station with a warrant for his apprehension should he attempt to escape."

"Heaven be praised ; what else have you done?"

"My clerk has gone to the magistrate to procure if possible an order for his arrest, should he return."

"He won't return there. He sent his traps away last night. He'll try for the rail. Lord be thanked you've sent the constable there. I suppose there isn't any doubt he'll get down to Bagley before Jinkins."

"Bagley ! the constable's gone to Copford ; that station is a mile nearer."

"May Heaven forgive you, you bald-headed old idiot. Do you think Jinkins would be such a fool as to go to the nearest railway-station ? Not him ! Oh, you awful green old imbecile to go and stick the constable as knows Jinkins at the railway-station he ain't a-going to, and let him just toddle off with the swag the other way. Confound your



sinful stupidity to everlasting oblivion, and may——”

At this moment the solicitor's clerk entered the office with the magistrate's warrant.

“You drove over in the trap—is it still outside?” asked the solicitor, pale with apprehension.

“Yes, sir,” replied the clerk.

“Now, sir,” the lawyer said, addressing his new client, who was marching up and down the room striking the tin boxes with his stick, and swearing vehemently, “now, sir, you know this Jenkins?”

“Know that Jenkins! Don't I know him as well as I know my own mother?—a scaly thief, a——”

“Well, sir, here is the warrant for his arrest, my trap is at the door; Jenkins was seen in the town here not half-an-hour since; if we start at once we may get to the station at Bagley first, and procure the assistance of the local policeman to arrest him. You can identify the man?”

“Now you show some sense. Identify him? I think I will. Come on. I'll drive.”

As the trap approached Bagley station a train was seen approaching. The lawyer's companion thrashed his horse unmercifully. They reached the station just as the train was drawing up beside the platform.

“Gi' me the warrant and let me have him, I'm lighter on foot than you,” he said, springing out of the trap. The paper was in the lawyer's hand, he passed it tremblingly to the excited little man, who at once dashed up the steps and on to the platform. The lawyer followed as quickly as he could; the train was just moving on as he came panting up and looked about for his companion.

“Hi, you lawyer,” cried the well-known voice.

He looked up, and saw his client hanging out of a first-class carriage window with the warrant in his hand.



“You lawyer, I told you Jenkins would go by this train if he could; and, thanks to you, he does. You can just go back and tell your clients you saw the last of him,” and Jenkins, with a triumphant laugh, waved the warrant for his own arrest in the face of the friend who had helped him to bolt.

THE END.

Stickling, April 1893.

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